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Edited by

DAVID MARCUS

and

TERENCE SMITH

NUMBER SEVENTEEN

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ERIC CROSS

THE POWERS OF IMAGINATION

“**Y**OU’LL remember to give a sop of hay to the cow,” said Michael Sullivan, as he drew on his coat.

“Indeed, but I’m less likely to forget that,” replied his wife, “than you are to remember the bottle of water from St. Brigid’s well that I’ve been asking you to get for me for months past.”

“Yerra, woman, I’m going on business—not to be traipsing bottles of spring water about the countryside like a mineral water manufacturer. We’ve water enough in the well at the door, and as for the rest of it, ’tis all in the power of imagination, as I’ve told you a hundred times.”

“Imagination or no imagination, ’twould be better for you than to be traipsing bottles of poteen round the countryside till one day the guards catch you. ’Tis then you’ll want the imagination to pay the fine.”

“Guards—where are you? To hear the way you talk anyone would think it was only yesterday I was born. I’d best be off or I’ll miss the train.”

* * *

He started up the track, over the shoulder of the hill. The bottle of poteen in his overcoat pocket bumped heavily against his thigh as he walked. It was a pleasant bumping, however, he mused, as soon it would be salved by the pound note he would get from Dick Hegarty for it. Yes, a pound at least. “A bottle of the best,” was the message, “for a man who wants it for greyhounds and won’t be mean about the price asked. If he’s satisfied there will be further orders. A strong buyer now, so don’t be letting me down and letting yourself down into the bargain.”

“A pound a bottle and further orders,” Michael Sullivan reflected. “And that might mean, say a bottle a day. And there were six days in the week, forgetting Sunday, when, most likely he’d have no need of it for greyhounds. Six days a week at a pound a day. That would be six pounds a week . . . that was a deal better than even a ganger’s job with the county council. Six pounds a week . . . and say, fifty working weeks in the year . . . that would be three hundred pounds a year. Three hundred pounds a year! What chance had a man to earn that slaving from morning to night, winter and summer, on a mountainy farm? It was every bit as good as a sergeant’s job in the guards. And to think of herself bothering him about an ould bottle of well water when he was almost in the way of being set up as a business man. Women were queer . . . they had the bad word for everything and no right use of their imagination at all.”

The Kilbrigid train was already in and waiting for the branch line connection when he reached the station. He took his seat in an empty compartment and cut himself a fill of tobacco and stretched at his ease. Then the foxy-haired fellow came in. He had always a dislike of a foxy man. Somehow they always seemed to spell trouble. The foxy man passed the time of day. Michael packed his pipe and threw open his coat for the matches in his inner pocket before he remembered. But it was too late. The foxy-haired fellow's eyes had spotted the bottle.

"A drop of the right stuff, I suppose," he said, sliding over on the seat. "I hear they have a great reputation for the making of it hereabouts."

But Michael Sullivan was much too quick for him.

"'Tis only a bottle of blessed water I'm taking in to a sick relation," he replied, without hesitation.

"Sure—of course it is," replied the foxy man. "Now what would be the price of a right bottle of it," he continued.

"'Tis a bottle of blessed water, I'm telling you."

"Manalive, we're agreed on that. 'Tis the matter of the price and the quality I'm interested in."

At that moment however, the branch line train pulled in and the foxy-haired man's attention was diverted. He spotted someone he was apparently waiting for down the platform and got hurriedly out of the compartment and Michael Sullivan was greatly relieved at his going. After all he could be, as likely as not, a guard or detective in plain clothes for there was a court in Kilbrigid that day. If only the train would start.

But the momentary relief was cut from its roots when, as the train was on the point of starting, the foxy-haired man jumped into the compartment, this time with two guards, confirming Michael Sullivan's apprehension.

However, they took little notice of him beyond a curt nod to him—or so it seemed. But that was small consolation to him. From somewhere at the back of his mind there came the remembrance that you couldn't be arrested on a moving train. That was why they said nothing and did nothing. They were waiting till he stepped out onto the platform at Kilbrigid. Then they would surround him and arrest him, search his pockets and find the evidence on him.

It all came of herself putting the bad word on the start of his journey. Now she would have the laugh on him, but the dear laugh. It might be a lesson to her if nothing else and teach her not to be drawing down misfortune with her tongue.

The group had got into an argument between themselves in the meantime. They were disputing the rights and the wrongs of a case to be heard that day and it was plain enough from the talk that the foxy-haired man was a detective alright.

"I tell you that he'll get off on a point of law," asserted the detective.

"You're letting your imagination run away with you, young fellow me lad. 'Tis a good thing that you have the guards to protect you from your ignorance," laughed one of the others, who had the stripes of a sergeant. "The law's a trickier thing than you think."

"Will you bet a level pound on it then?" whipped back the detective.

"I will, I will," replied the sergeant eagerly. "'Twill be the easiest money I ever won."

The matter did not concern Michael Sullivan. He had enough to worry him, but he could not help hearing it. The words and phrases floated into his mind, mingling with his brooding. "A point of the law . . . The law's a trickier thing . . ." Then, suddenly, the ghost of a smile came to his face as an idea blossomed. Guards, where are you! He wasn't born yesterday. The laugh was with him now. Where were they at all? Ah, they had just passed Mauleen. A couple of miles and they would be coming to the Gorey tunnel . . . the creamery . . . Pat Lucey's cross . . . the main road . . . any moment now.

Suddenly the train plunged into darkness. Sulphurous smoke belched and billowed into the compartment through the wide open window. Quick as a cat he jumped up, whipped the bottle from his pocket and dropped it out and then noisily pulled up the window. When the train came out into the daylight again he was sitting in his corner, quietly smiling to himself. Guards, where are you!

He waited in joyful contemplation of the moment when they had stopped in Kilbrigid and the train had emptied and he was walking away about his business and the sergeant came alongside him and put his hand on his shoulder. Then he would have the laugh on them. But, more than that, he would have the law on them. He would show them that they could not do what they liked with Michael Sullivan.

He would let them take him to the barracks through the streets of Kilbrigid. There he would ask for a solicitor. Old Geraghty would be his man. He would claim compensation for unlawful arrest and public loss of character without a shred of evidence against him. He knew the law alright and these fellows could not do just as they liked with law-abiding men. The smile on his face broadened. He had been anticipating a miserable pound for the day. Why this day would be worth hundreds at least. Michael Sullivan wasn't born yesterday.

The train drew in to Kilbrigid. The sergeant and guard leaped out. Sullivan took his time, drawing his coat round him and buttoning it slowly. He stepped out onto the platform. The foxy-haired detective followed him out. How clever they were—or thought they were with their plan. Just too clever by half. The moment was approaching which would be great retelling through the winter months.

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The detective sidled up to him and walked alongside him. "If it's the right stuff I'll give you fifteen bob for it."

"I don't know what you are talking about," replied Sullivan with great dignity.

"Yerra, man, stop your coddling. I've greyhounds myself. I'll make it seventeen-and-six and you can hand it over to me in the waiting room."

"'Tis a bottle of blessed water, I'm after telling you before."

"Alright, alright. Have it your own way. You're a hard man. I'll go to an even pound."

The sergeant and the guard were waiting ahead for him. "Come on, Mick," they called impatiently, "we're late enough already."

The detective drew away. "You'll do no better than that. They are a mean lot in Kilbrigid. An even pound. I'll see you on the five o'clock train."

Guards and detective disappeared into the street and Michael Sullivan was left alone with his empty victory. All that he had done was to make a fool, a double fool, of himself. Here he was in Kilbrigid with the whole day wasted before him, empty of purpose, devoid of profit, just because he had let his imagination run away with him.

He dared not show his face into Hegarty's now unless he wanted dog's abuse. He wandered round the town looking into the shop windows. He had a pint and a bite to eat in a pub. He walked out one road and then another in order to fill the empty mocking hours. He had another drink and got an empty wine bottle from the barman and then went along to St. Brigid's well outside the town and filled it. He might as well be doing that as anything. At least he would not have to listen to herself nagging him about that when he got back, small consolation though that would be.

He took his seat in the return train early. As five o'clock approached it began to fill. The sergeant and guard got into the compartment but beyond a nod, paid no attention to him. Just before the train started the detective came bustling along, looking for them, and came breezily in.

"Come along, sergeant, pay up and look smiling. You can't pull wool over the eyes of the detective force you know."

"Alright, alright, me boy. There's your pound for you. But don't let it go to your head. 'Tis but beginner's luck—and you'll probably pay dearly for it."

The detective took the pound and kissed it in triumph. The train started, and after a few moments he slid over to Michael Sullivan. Nodding towards the bulge in his overcoat pocket he said, "I see you didn't do your bit of business. I told you that they were a mean lot in Kilbrigid. But I won't go back on my offer. A pound and it's a deal."

Michael Sullivan wasn't in the mood for reviving the subject.

with all its bitter personal recriminations, and answered him snappishly.

"I'm telling you that it's a bottle of blessed water. The relation was taken away to the hospital and I was too late." But even as he said the words, almost mechanically, there was a stirring in his mind. It wasn't quite clear yet but some sort of an idea was being born.

"Well—they're tough, mighty tough in the West. Come on man, make it a deal for twenty-two-and-six."

Michael Sullivan held his peace. He was letting the idea dry its wings.

"Alright—'tis as you say. 'Tis a bottle of blessed water and I'm paying twenty-two-and-six for it. Now will that do you. I'll pay you over the money now and you can leave the bottle on the seat when you get out."

The idea was taking form though it was not yet quite distinct. "I wouldn't have it on my conscience to be swindling any man or to be selling him a thing under false pretences. 'Tis but a bottle of blessed water. Let the sergeant there judge."

With that he drew the bottle from his pocket and handed it to the sergeant. The sergeant scanned it carefully. He drew the cork and smelt the contents of the bottle with leisurely deliberation. He put the bottle to his lips and tasted it, rolling it round his mouth. Then he smacked his lips, rammed the cork back tightly into the bottle and handed it back to Sullivan.

"'Tis the true, genuine and unadulterated article—and well I should know it, being brought up on it almost, as you might say. Time and time again it has saved my life. 'Tis a certain cure for rheumatism, sciaticy and pains in the bones." And as he made this solemn pronouncement he winked very, very slowly and solemnly.

The detective returned to the bargaining. "Well—it's a deal then. I'm satisfied."

But events took a quick turn. The sergeant had done a bit of quick thinking and before Michael Sullivan replied he chipped in.

"'Tis the sort of thing that a man wouldn't care to be putting a price on or valuing in money but I am just thinking that there is nothing in this world would please my missus more than for me to bring her home such a bottle after my visit to Kilbrigid. Her mother always has the sciaticy bad in the winter and she'll be visiting her next week. I'll go to twenty-five bob for it."

"For a bottle of water from a well?"

"Sure we know that. Haven't I tasted it myself? What else would it be or would I be buying?"

The next station was Michael Sullivan's. He drew the coat round him and started to button it.

"Twenty-seven-and-six," said the detective.

"Twenty-eight-and-six," chipped in the sergeant.

"Twenty-nine shillings," added the detective.

"Twenty-nine-and-six," spoke up the sergeant. "I wouldn't be spoiling a good thought for a miserable shilling or so."

The train drew into the station. Michael Sullivan got up from his seat.

"Here, take the two notes," said the detective, proffering him thirty shillings. Michael Sullivan undid his coat and drew out the bottle. He got the two notes into his fist and handed over the bottle to the detective. "Ye're witnesses, every man of you, that 'tis a bottle of blessed water I'm selling."

"We are, we are," the company chorussed. "I suppose that it's his lucky dāy," added the sergeant with a private wink to Sullivan. "And no man can be beat when the luck runs with him. 'Tis better to be born lucky I suppose than to be born intelligent. Good night to you now."

* * * *

"It's a queer thing after all," Michael Sullivan thought, as he climbed up the dark mountain track, with the two notes held sweetly in his fingers, "'tis a queer thing alright, what a power there is in the imagination: that a man should go against the hearing of his own ears and the sense of his own reason because of it. And to think that that is the sort of fellows we have running the country for us and that's the sort of fellows herself is warning me against. Guards, where are you!"

* * * *

"Well, I suppose after all your day's traipsing about the countryside you forgot the bottle of water for me," was his wife's greeting as he entered the kitchen.

"I tell you, woman, that I was on business bent and I had no time to be worrying myself about bottles of water. There's a fine spring well outside your own door if you would only use that and the powers of imagination rightly instead of putting the bad word on everything. Have you the tea ready?"

"The tea is by the fire for you. Wish! I don't suppose that you'll get sense till the guards catch you and charge you dearly for the teaching of you."

"Guards, me eye!" Michael Sullivan laughed. "To hear the talk by you one would think that I was only born yesterday. Guards teach me, indeed! 'Tis the clever guard will be the match for Michael Sullivan—or detective either."

SAMUEL BECKETT

EXTRACT FROM WATT

IT was about this time that Watt was transferred to another pavilion, leaving me behind in the old pavilion. We consequently met, and conversed, less than formerly. Not that at any time we had met, or conversed, very much, for we had not. For we seldom left our mansions, Watt seldom left his mansion and I seldom left mine. And when the kind of weather we liked did induce us to leave our mansions, and go out into the garden, it did not always do so at the same time. For the kind of weather I liked, while resembling the kind of weather Watt liked, had certain properties that the kind of weather Watt liked had not, and lacked certain properties that the kind of weather Watt liked had. So that when, together tempted from our mansions by what each felt to be the kind of weather he liked, we met in the little garden, and perhaps conversed (for though we could not converse without meeting, we could, and often did, meet without conversing), the disappointment of one of us at least was almost certain, and the regret, the bitter regret, at ever having left his mansion at all, and the vow, the hollow vow, never to leave his mansion again, never never to leave his mansion again, on any account. So we knew resistance too, resistance to the call of the kind of weather we liked, but seldom simultaneously. Not that our resisting simultaneously had any bearing on our meeting, our conversing, for it had not. For when we both resisted we no more met, no more conversed, than when the one resisted the other yielded. But ah when we yielded both, then we met, and perhaps conversed, in the little garden.

It is so easy to accept, so easy to refuse, when the call is heard, so easy, so easy. But to us, in our windowlessness, in our bloodheat, in our hush, to us who could not hear the wind, nor see the sun, what call could come, from the kind of weather we liked, but a call so faint as to mock acceptance, mock refusal? And it was of course impossible to have any confidence in the meteorological information of our attendants. So it is not to be wondered at if, through sheer ignorance of what was going on without, we spent indoors, now Watt, now I, now Watt and I, many fleeing hours that might have fled, just as well, if not better, certainly not worse, from us with us as we walked, Watt, or I, or Watt and I, and perhaps even went through some of the forms of conversation, in the little garden. No, but what is to be wondered at is this, that to us both, disposed to yield, the call should come, and coax us out, as often it did, into the little garden. Yes, that we should have ever met, and spoken and listened together, and that my arm should ever have rested on his arm, and

his on mine, and our shoulders ever touched, and our legs moved in and out, together over more or less the same ground, parallelly the right legs forward, the left ones back, and then without hesitation the reverse, and that, leaning forward, breast to breast, we should ever have embraced (oh, exceptionally, and of course never on the mouth), that seemed to me, the last time I remembered strange, strange. For we never left our mansions, never, unless at the call of the kind of weather we liked, Watt never left his for me, I never left mine for him, but leaving them independently at the call of the kind of weather we liked we met, and even conversed, with the utmost friendliness, and even tenderness, in the little garden.

No truck with the other scum, cluttering up the passageways, the hallways, grossly loud, blatantly morose, and playing at ball, always playing at ball, but stiffly, delicately, out from our mansions, and through this jocose, this sniggering muck, to the kind of weather we liked, and back as we went.

The kind of weather we liked was a high wind and a bright sun mixed. But whereas for Watt the important thing was the wind, the sun was the important thing for Sam. With the result that though the sun though bright were not so bright as it might have been, if the wind were high Watt did not audibly complain, and that I, when illuminated by rays of appropriate splendour, could forgive a wind which, while strong, might with advantage have been stronger. It is thus evident that the occasions were few and far between on which, walking and perhaps talking in the little garden, we walked there and perhaps talked with equal enjoyment. For when on Sam the sun shone bright, then in a vacuum panted Watt, and when Watt like a leaf was tossed, then stumbled Sam in deepest night. But ah when exceptionally the desired degrees of ventilation and radiance were united, then we were peers in peace, each in his own way, until the wind fell, the sun declined.

Not that the garden was so little, for it was not, being of ten or fifteen acres in extent. But it seemed little to us, after our mansions.

In it great pale aspens grew, and yews ever dark, with tropical luxuriance, and other trees, in lesser numbers.

They rose from the wild pathless grass, so that we walked much in shade, heavy, trembling, fierce, tempestuous.

In winter there were the thin shadows writhing, under our feet, in the wild withered grass.

Of flowers there was no trace, save of the flowers that plant themselves, or never die, or die only after many seasons, strangled by the rank grass.

Of vegetables there was no sign.

There was a little stream, or brook, never dry, flowing, now slow, now with torrential rapidity, for ever in its narrow ditch. Unsteadily a rustic bridge bestrode its dark waters, a rustic hump-

backed bridge, in a state of extreme dilapidation.

It was through the crown of this construction that one day Watt, treading more heavily than was his wont, or picking his steps with less than his usual care, drove his foot, and part of his leg. And he would certainly have fallen, and perhaps been carried away by the subfluent flood, had I not been at hand to bear him up. For this trifling service, I remember, I received no thanks. But we set to work at once, Watt from one bank, I from the other, with stout boughs and withes of willow, to repair the havoc. We lay full length on our stomachs, I at my full length on my stomach and Watt at his on his, partly (for security) on our banks, partly on the upslopes of the stages, and worked with diligence with arms outstretched until our task was done, and the place mended, and as good as before, if not better. Then, our eyes meeting, we smiled, a thing we rarely did, when together. And when we had lain a little thus, with this exceptional smile, on our faces, then we began to draw ourselves forward, and upward, and persisted in this course until our heads, our noble bulging brows, met, and touched, Watt's noble brow, and my noble brow. And then we did a thing we seldom did, we embraced. Watt laid his hands on my shoulders, and I laid mine on his (I could scarcely do otherwise), and then I touched Watt's left cheek with my lips, and then Watt touched my left cheek with his (he could scarcely do less), the whole coolly, and above us tossed the overarching boughs.

Of seats, on which to sit down, and rest, there was not the slightest vestige.

Shrubs and bushes, properly so called, were absent from the scene. But thickets rose at every turn, brakes of impenetrable density, and towering masses of brambles, of a beehive form.

Birds of every kind abounded, and these it was our delight to pursue, with stones and clods of earth. Robins in particular, thanks to their confidingness, we destroyed in great numbers. And larks' nests, laden with eggs still warm from the mother's breast, we ground into fragments, under our feet, with peculiar satisfaction, at the appropriate season, of the year.

But our particular friends were the rats, that dwelt by the stream. They were long and black. We brought them such titbits from our ordinary as rinds of cheese, and morcels of gristle, and we brought them also birds' eggs, and frogs, and fledgelings. Sensible of these attentions, they would come flocking around us at our approach, with every sign of confidence and affection, and glide up our trouserlegs, and hang upon our breasts. And then we would sit down in the midst of them, and give them to eat, out of our hands, of a nice fat frog, or a baby thrush. Or seizing suddenly a plump young rat, resting in our bosom after its repast, we would feed it to its mother, or its father, or its brother, or its sister, or to some less fortunate relation.

It was on these occasions, we agreed, after an exchange of views, that we came nearest to God.

This garden was surrounded by a high barbed wire fence, greatly in need of repair, of new wire, of fresh barbs. Through this fence, where it was not overgrown by briars and giant nettles, similar gardens, similarly enclosed, each with its pavilion, were on all sides distinctly to be seen. Now converging, now diverging, these fences presented a striking irregularity of contour. No fence was party, nor any part of any, but their adjacence was such, at certain places, that a broad man, broad of shoulder, or of basin, threading these narrow straits, would have done so with greater ease, and with less jeopardy to his coat, or to his trousers, sideways than frontways.

Some time passed, after Watt's transfer, before we met again. I walked in my garden as usual, that is to say when I yielded to the call of the kind of weather I liked, and similarly Watt walked in his. But as it was no longer the same garden, we did not meet. When finally we did meet, again, in the way to be described, it was clear to us both, to me, to Watt, that we might have met much sooner, if we had wished. But there, the wish to meet was wanting. Watt did not wish to meet me, I did not wish to meet Watt. This is not to say that we were opposed to meeting, to resuming our walks, our talks, as before, for we were not, but only that the wish to do so was not felt, by Watt, by me.

Till one fine day, of unparalleled brightness and turbulence, I found my steps impelled, as though by some external agency, towards the fence. And this impulsion was maintained, until I could go no further, in that direction, without doing myself an injury. Then it left me and I looked about, a thing I never used to do, on any account, in the ordinary way. And so looking about me, like a mad creature, I perceived, beyond all possibility of error, that I was in the presence of one of those channels or straits described above, where the limit of my garden, and that of another, followed the same course, at so short a remove, the one from the other, and for so considerable a distance, that it was impossible for doubts not to arise, in a reasonable mind, regarding the sanity of the person responsible for the arrangement. Continuing my inspection, like one deprived of his senses, I discerned, with a distinctness that left no room for doubt, in the adjoining garden whom do you think but Watt, advancing backwards towards me. His progress was slow and devious, on account no doubt of his having no eyes in the back of his head, and painful too, I fancy. For often he struck against the trunks of trees, or in the tangles of underwood caught his foot, and fell to the ground, flat on his back, or into a great clump of brambles, or of briars, or of nettles, or of thistles. But still without murmur he came on, until he lay against the fence, with his hands at arm's length grasping the wires. Then he turned, with the intention very likely of going back the way he had come, and I saw his face, and the rest of his

front. His face was bloody, his hands also, and thorns were in his scalp. And suddenly I felt as though I were standing before a great mirror, in which my garden was reflected, and my fence, and I, and the very birds tossing in the wind, so that I looked at my hands, and felt my face, and glossy skull, in anxiety. Why, Watt, I cried, that is a nice state you have got yourself into, to be sure. Not it is, yes, replied Watt. This short phrase caused me, I believe, more alarm, more pain, than if I had received, unexpectedly, at close quarters, a charge of small shot in the ravine. Wonder I, said Watt, hankypanky me lend you could, blood away wipe. Wait, wait, I am coming, I cried, and closed my eyes. But when I opened them again Watt was no longer there, nor indeed in any of the other places, and they were numerous, within my field of vision. But when I called, Watt! Watt!, then out he came, awkwardly buttoning his trousers which he was wearing back to front, out from behind a tree, and then backwards, guided by my cries, slowly, painfully, often falling, but as often picking himself up, and without murmur, towards where I stood, until at last, after so long, I could touch him again, with my hand. Then I reached out with my hand, through the hole, and drew him, through the hole, to my side. And then taking a little cloth that I had in my pocket I wiped his face, and his hands. And then taking a little box of ointment that I had in my pocket I anointed his face, and his hands. And then taking a little handcomb that I had in my pocket I straightened his tufts, and his whiskers. And then taking a little clothesbrush that I had in my pocket I brushed his coat, and his trousers. Then I turned him round, until he faced me. Then I placed his hands, on my shoulders, his left hand on my right shoulder, his right hand on my left shoulder. Then I placed my hands, on his shoulders, on his left shoulder my right hand, on his right shoulder my left hand. Then I took a single pace forward, with my left leg, and he a single pace back, with his right leg (he could scarcely do otherwise). Then I took a double pace forward, with my right leg, and he of course with his left leg a double pace back. And so we paced together between the fences, I forwards, he backwards, until we came to where they diverged again. And then turning, I turning, and he turning, we paced back the way we had come, I forwards, and he of course backwards, with our hands on our shoulders, as before, And so pacing back the way we had come we passed the holes and paced on, between the fences, until we came to where they diverged again. And then turning, as one man, we paced back the way we had paced back the way we had come, I looking whither we were going, he looking whence we were coming. And so, up and down, up and down, we paced between the fences, together again after so long, and the sun shone bright upon us, and the wind blew wild about us.

To be together again, after so long, who love the sunny wind, the windy sun, in the sun, in the wind, that is perhaps something, perhaps something.

So we began, after so long a time, to walk together again,
and to talk, from time to time.

* * * *

Continuing then, when he had told me all this, then he loosed my hands from his shoulders, and backwards through the hole went back, to his garden, and left me alone, with only my poor eyes to follow him, this last of many times to follow him, over the deep threshing shadows backwards stumbling, towards his habitation. And often he struck against the trunks of trees, and in the tangles of underwood caught his foot, and fell to the ground, on his back, on his face, on his side, or into a great clump of brambles, or of briars, or of thistles, or of nettles. But ever he picked himself up and unmurmuring went on, towards his habitation, until I saw him no more, but only the aspens, and the yews. And from the hidden pavilions, his and mine, where by this time dinner was preparing, the issuing smokes by the wind were blown, now far apart, but now together, mingled to vanish.

ROBERT O'DONOGHUE

DEATH OF AN OLD WOMAN

I did not call to see her while she lay ill.
Tongues wagged to blame me, called me harsh names;
Said I had grown away from her and cared little
Whether she went or stayed; said my heart was made
Of bitterness out of old wrongs.
This they did not know, that I was there
In the end—quietly, so quietly she did not know,
And when Death the sleeper came, not Death the pain,
I closed her cold eyes, left her there with the smile on her mouth.

MAURICE KENNEDY

IN THE EVENING

THE sun had long gone down behind the hill, leaving the little town in shadow. The estuary was a dark sheet of burnished steel fading into a rim of lemon-coloured sky on the horizon. On the opposite shore the long projecting sandbank was a black bar against the water. There, dim figures pushed a rowing-boat down over the shingle, and the harsh scraping sound came clearly over the mile of water to the man sitting in the dusk on the quay wall. Farther up the river, near the bridge, a salmon jumped with a flat metallic sound like a pistol-shot.

On the second floor of the town hall, lights went on against the gathering darkness. Behind the tall windows were shadows of people moving around inside. A band began to tune up in scattered bursts of sound, ending in a rattle of drums. Small cold breezes moved over the estuary, over the tide-current coming silently in from the sea.

Jimmy sat on the cold rough concrete of the quay, his feet hanging over the edge. Fingers of one hand tapped idly on the concrete. The other hand loosely gripped a fishing line which ran off into the water to vanish out of sight, and back behind to where it was tied to a chain-stanchion. The line throbbed steadily from the gradual movement of the water. Jimmy sat in darkness, beside the framework of abandoned oars which served for drying nets. From time to time he hummed softly under his breath and kicked his heels against the face of the quay.

A catpaw of wind veered down the river from the gully of hills beyond the bridge, blurring the smooth surface of the water, sending small ripples pattering against the quay. Jimmy shivered, stood up, and began to haul in the line rapidly, the cold salt water dripping over his numbed hands. The grip-knot on the line came in sight, a streamer of silky green weed clinging to it, and then the heavy lead thumped against the face of the quay. The hooks were bare, stripped without sign by the nibbling mouths of eels or prawns.

He took a sprat from a jam-jar under the net-rack, baited the hooks again, swung the line twice and threw it smoothly out into the darkness. A seagull wheeled over the water to investigate the splash and went away again on silent wings. Jimmy sat quietly in the shadows as a saxophone started to moan softly in the warmth of the town hall.

Footsteps came round the corner, clicking on the moss-grown cobblestones, and came to a halt beside the stanchion. A soft voice said, "Goodnight, Jimmy."

"Hello," he said, without looking back at the woman in the shadow, her face a shapeless blur against the tall black hulk of the old warehouse.

"A nice night," she said.

There was a sharp, repeated tug at the line. He jerked his hand back swiftly and began to pull in the line, which veered from side to side as it came in, until the flat pallid belly of a sand-dab flickered under the surface. He rebaited the hook and slung the lead out again. The dab jumped spasmodically, covering its flat glistening sides with a coat of dry dust. Behind him a match scraped and flared briefly.

He twisted around on the edge of the quay and looked back into the darkness. The changing glow of the cigarette lit up her mouth, her nose, her high cheekbones, a disembodied deathmask hung in a pit of blackness. The harsh orange light brought out a glitter in her eyes, made black scars of her wide mouth and the patches of make-up on her cheeks.

"Jimmy," she said, "where have you been keeping yourself these past few weeks?"

"Nowhere, Jenny," he said, "nowhere at all. Been around on my own."

"Why don't you ever come out with the crowd these times?" she asked. "You know we — we all miss you."

There was a dead feeling, a lack of tension, about the line. He pulled it in, and a crab emerged from the water, clinging tightly to the baited hook. He dropped the crab into the jar and swung the lead up and out over his head in a long sweep without getting to his feet.

Jenny put one small foot on the slack of the chain and absent-mindedly began to swing it to and fro. The rusty links made a monotonous ringing noise that set his teeth on edge. The crab was scrambling around in the jam-jar. He took it out and held it between thumb and fingers, watching the long savage claws wave helplessly in the air, the eyes swivelling on their stalks, feeling the pointed legs scrabbling against his hand. He squeezed the shell and the crab made a feeble bubbling sound.

"You know," said Jenny, "we had good times this summer."

"We had, surely," he agreed, slowly.

"We could have good times yet," she said. He didn't answer. The cigarette-end went past him in a red streak, hissed once in the water, and was lost.

"Was it something I said, Jimmy?" she asked.

"No," he said, "nothing. Nothing." With his free hand, he broke the crab's legs, joint by joint. He tore off each leg separately. He picked off the shell in little pieces, slowly and thoroughly. Finally, there was nothing left, except a scrap of pulp and two staring eyes on long stalks. He shivered again. In the town hall, the drummer was warming up with a rattle on the skull-blocks.

"Are you coming to the dance tonight?" she asked, in a small

voice.

"No," said Jimmy, "I don't think so. I'm going to fish until the tide turns, and then I'm going home. Dancing is all a cod."

"Ah, God, Jimmy!" she said, "Why ——." She didn't finish the question.

There was the sound of someone walking heavily along the quay. Jimmy recognised the footsteps. Casey's footsteps, jaunty and self-assured, both feet down solid and flat. He didn't like Casey. Casey always reminded him of a conger-eel, the same flabby white appearance, the same brutal strength and smoothness, the same long, grinning, savage jaw.

"Begod, Jimmy, I'd hardly have noticed you only for spotting Jenny," said Casey's big hearty voice. "How's the fishing going? You'll get corns in a quare place from sitting on that cold concrete." He laughed at that, but Jimmy stayed silent. Behind him, the sand-dab gave a last dying flutter and lay still. On the opposite side of the estuary, a sheepdog uttered a long howl at the moon rising over the foreland. In the town hall, the band struck up a warm blare of music.

"Come on, Jenny," said Casey, "and we'll leave him to it." Their footsteps echoed back from the shuttered windows of the warehouse as they went away. Words drifted faintly back, the deep voice saying, "Why in God's name do you be talking to that quare fellow?" and a ghost of soft laughter following.

A cold grey light seemed to be coming out of the oily surface of the water. Down far below the surface, down among the mud and stones, among the seaweed and old bottles, a flounder was struggling uselessly to free itself from the tearing torture of the barbed hook. The line was twitching, unnoticed. Jimmy slammed his hand savagely against the rough edge of the quay, and cursed at the sudden pain.

PAUL BRAMBLE

THE DEN

Join us in the den
Of disappointed men!
Only wear a weary hat
That piddles when the rain comes down.
You don't have to be articulate:
There is no selectivity. Just be seen around
To meet and sing the songs that resurrect
The magic that we thought was there.
Old Tom Moore is at our beck—
Will carry us without a fare
To a sad, sad such a place
None of us knows where.

If you like us, it won't be long
Before you, yourself, in due course
Will discover that you belong
To the bleary-eyed bravado of remorse
Always with us. In fog and fumes,
In querulous, uneasy noise
Or the silence of despair,
We squat or stand in low-ceilinged rooms
And shut the doors and draw the blinds down from the air
Or light or anything would dissipate our dreams.
Now we can all be easy—
Left behind is the tissue of our lives—its reams
And reams always at a loss to say
What we have tried so hard to utter;
Why our efforts frittered against the wall
Of our ideals. For one short while the din and clutter
Will keep us warm within our den,
Always we can call our own.
For one short while we are men
Reversing to where it all began,
Feeling the fabric we had then
And free from the nagging pain
Of the outside. Come and share the rain
And sun of our terrain!
Be a sport and make another one
Of our number and we'll make it an occasion!

TERESA DEEVY

GOING BEYOND ALMA'S GLORY

A Radio Play in one Act

CHARACTERS

ALICE COLEMAN	...	...	...	A waitress
TED MORAN	...	...	Works in a newspaper office.	
EDMUND SPILLANE	...	...	...	Ex-journalist
MONA PEWITT	...	...	...	An actress
1st WOMAN				
2nd WOMAN				

(The action takes place in a city restaurant. Fade in: subdued street sounds. These swell and diminish as a swing door is opened and closed. Then movements in a cafe, cups and saucers being placed on marble-topped tables. Subdued, indistinct voices. Then—clearly—a man's step coming to a table, a chair pulled out, a newspaper opened noisily, and folded at a chosen place. A girl's step)

Girl's voice: Tea, is it?

Man: Hello, Alice, I'm late today. *(Young voice).*

Alice: Nearly half past four. Cup of tea or pot for one?

Man: No hurry. I was waiting for Mr. Spillane—that's what delayed me. He hasn't been here I suppose.

Alice: I didn't see him, Mr. Moran.

Man: Mr. Moran. My word. Why are we back to this once more?

Alice: *(Unbending).* Tea for one.

Man: I gave no order, little waitress. What's the hurry? I come at the slack hour so's we can talk.

Alice: You did once, now you wait for Mr. Spillane.

Man: So that's the trouble . . .

Alice: After four. We'll be having a rush very soon.

Man: Plenty of others waiting for work. Three girls over there doing nothing, only two tables occupied. Don't go pretending you're busy.

Alice: I'd better take these cups away. *(Sound of cups gathered on to a tray).*

Man: No tip. Nothing left . . . beastly brutes whoever they were.

Alice: Mind Ted. You musn't catch my arm, not here.

Ted: We're getting better, so I let go . . . Leave these cups

and things as they are. See here, this paper . . . see that list.

Alice: I saw it first thing now when I came over—today's race. That's getting to be the favourite part of your paper. (*But she is friendly now*).

Ted: Money, my dear, money in it, no use looking down your nose at that. Now pick me a winner. Shut your eyes and run your pencil down that list, and stop ad lib.

Alice: Rot. I don't believe in that at all, and what's more I don't like your betting, Ted.

Ted: But suppose I win—suppose I got on an outsider and won . . . what happens. You chuck this job, and we . . .

Alice: Oh, I don't know. I like my job . . . and I've often heard "start on a winner, break on a loser" . . . that's what I've always heard. Anyway you've backed already so why ask me.

Ted: Of course I've backed. (*Laughs*). But I want you to tell me I'm winning. We'll have the result at any minute. Now shut them tight. Good girl. 'Alma's Glory' . . . mine. I think you knew. I think you squinted.

Alice: No, but you stopped my pencil. (*They laugh—then seriously*). That Mr. Spillane—he has started you betting.

Ted: No. He's always warning me away.

Alice: It's queer. You being so friendly with that sort. What do you like about him?

Ted: He's the sort you'd get to like.

Alice: You don't know him very long. He must be about fifty.

Ted: What's wrong with that?

Alice: I'd say over fifty—and you, not yet thirty.

Ted: There he is. Stopped outside. Who's the fellow talking to him?

Alice: You'd never know who might be talking to Mr. Spillane. (*Contempt*).

Ted: (*Pleading*). That man's had a hard time, Alice.

Alice: How?

Ted: One thing and another. He's come down a bit in the world . . . and . . . his wife left him three years ago. He was awfully cut. She treated him badly.

Alice: I wonder what's her story. Hanging round, often not sober. Never doing any work.

Ted: He's got a job now in Carlton's office. Newspaper work . . . something like mine. He may be put on our paper.

Alice: If he keeps this for a month. Why do you like him, Ted? Can't you tell me.

Ted: (*Slowly*). There are people . . . you can't explain it. . . but you'd like them, no matter what they do.

Alice: Sense. I keep that before me . . . good sense, that is what we want most, I think. (*Clinging to her faith*). Now I may as well bring the tea for you . . . a pot I suppose?

Ted: No, two cups, that's all we'll want. We'll wait here for the result . . . the race.

Alice: Is he on 'Alma's Glory' too?

Ted: He's put all he has on her.

Alice: All he has. He deserves to lose.

Ted: I tell you it's sure. A sure thing.

Alice: They always are.

Ted: Alice, one time Spillane was very hard up I offered him a loan, he wouldn't take it.

Alice: That was mighty grand of him—but (*laughingly*) don't tempt him too often. You . . . giving a loan. I like that. It's well to know what I might expect.

Ted: Look here . . .

Alice: Now leave my hand alone. You'd never know who might be looking. I'd better be busy. (*Sound of cups, etc.*) Making me lose my job perhaps . . . (*affectionately*). Here's Mr. Spillane. Now, when I bring the cups I'll barely put them down before you, don't speak to me, it's better not.

Ted: Oh, font of wisdom.

Alice: Well that's me. I don't want to get friendly with him. (*Withdrawing—then coming back*). He looks someway upset. Doesn't he? (*Low*). Nervous . . . See his hands. The way they work . . . always when there's something wrong . . . and he trying to keep dead calm . . . I've often watched.

Ted: Oh, have you?

Alice: He's more than usual worried now, but you bet your life he'll carry it off.

Ted: Careful . . .

Alice: I'm fading out . . . (*going*).

Spillane: Miss Coleman . . . wait a moment. (*Cultured voice*).

Alice: Oh, Mr. Spillane. Fine day, isn't it . . . at least it was early.

Spillane: Pouring now. (*They all laugh*).

Alice: I hadn't noticed. I was busy.

Spillane: Blind and busy—they go side by side. Take a leaf out of my book, not exactly what's called a worker. But I can see the rain. Rain is of national importance. Now why are you running away in a hurry? I haven't even given my order.

Alice: Ted has, I mean Mr. Moran, two cups of tea.

Spillane: I'll make it three—a pot for three, and cakes as well.

Ted: Three Spillane? Why, who's coming?

Spillane: I wish we could ask Miss Coleman to join us, then we'd have four, but that, I understand is against regulations.

Alice: Dead kind of you to think of it.

Spillane: Sometime when you're off duty, we'll have a party.

Alice: (*Going*) Oh, I don't know I'm sure.

Ted: Who is number three for now? And the cakes?

Spillane: For my wiife.

IRISH WRITING

Ted: Your . . . Spillane . . . your wife. Coming here?

Spillane: I expect so . . . Mona Pewitt, comedy actress . . . You must meet her in that spirit. "Comedy Actress" remember Moran.

Ted: I don't think I want to meet her. (*Slowly*).

Spillane: Well, I haven't yet, not for three years. (*He has assumed a light tone*).

Ted: Hang it, what brings her back to you now? Now of all times when you have a chance of getting some money . . . 'Alma's Glory'.

Spillane: That's why I had to be on a winner today.

Ted: You mean . . .? You knew she was coming?

Spillane: I had an inkling she might come soon . . .

Ted: And that is why you must win, I see. (*Accusingly, growing angry*). She ruined you already . . . all that extravagance. All that worry.

Spillane: My good fellow, was that really the version I gave you? (*Laughs a little unsteadily*).

Ted: Spillane, tell me, honest, do you want to see her? Glad she's come?

Spillane: Would be hilariously happy if I were certain of 'Alma's Glory'. (*Quietly*).

Ted: Hilariously happy! (*Unbelieving*).

Spillane: If it were you and the little waitress?

Ted: Not if she had treated me badly.

Spillane: Badly . . . ah badly. (*Alice comes, sound of cups, etc.*) This friend of yours, Miss Coleman, has some very foolish ideas.

Alice: I always thought it. Often said it. No sense at all. Are those cakes right?

Spillane: They'll do nicely: it all depends on the way they're eaten . . . not what we get but how we swallow . . . act of swallowing.

Alice: That's a good one. They're swallowed all wrong then as a rule . . . most things are . . . (*She goes*).

Spillane: (*With deep earnestness*). You see Moran, I musn't have told you . . . Mona is really a . . . an extremely likeable person.

Ted: Why would you tell me? You didn't ever say very much . . . but what you did say didn't give me that impression.

Spillane: There she is . . . (*Tight-voiced*).

Ted: Where? Where?

Spillane: (*Quietly*). Over there . . . near the counter.

Ted: In the fur coat? Well dressed . . . distinguished looking?

Spillane: That's Mona. . .

Ted: You knew she was coming?

Spillane: I surmised it, hearing she was back in town . . . I hoped we might have the race result before she came.

Ted: Any minute. But if you win . . . I mean when you win, you're not going to . . . to waste it, are you? (*Then with deep suspicion*). Would she have known you're on a winner?

Spillane: (*Short*). No, she wouldn't.

Ted: You have ordered the tea and all— (*Quietly wondering*).

Spillane: Do you think this can be easy for her, facing back? Moran, will you slip down as far as Faulkner's . . . they'll have first news and bring me word.

Ted: (*Sound of chair being pushed out*). By all means.

Spillane: Wait. No hurry. They can't have it for another few minutes. Sit down again. Take some tea . . . (*pouring out*). Only wanted to have asked you in case she came over.

Ted: Then I'll clear.

Spillane: Nothing immediate. You must meet her. Cake as well. (*Pours another cup of tea*).

Ted: Why only a half one for yourself?

Spillane: Because, since you must know it, my hand is damn shaky.

Ted: (*Moved*). Spillane, I'm certain I've said the wrong things now . . . butted and blustered—but I'm with you.

Spillane: I haven't a notion what either of us has been saying. Take another, go on, man. (*Then, very low*). She's coming. Stay where you are. (*Steps coming, they stop*).

Mona: Is this place engaged? Or may I sit down? (*In a deliberately languid tone, mature voice*).

Spillane: Engaged for you. Your tea is ready . . . (*Dry and almost steady*).

Mona: Who is this polite young man? Actually he has had the manners to stand up.

Spillane: My friend Mr. Moran . . . meet Mrs. Spillane.

Mona: I prefer to be called "Mona Pewitt", comedy actress.

Spillane: He'll see that you're acting . . . the name doesn't matter.

Ted: I must be going . . . I have . . . important business.

Spillane: Come back quickly.

Mona: How kind of you . . . Mr. Moran . . . to be so suddenly . . . busy . . . (*Ted's steps going*). Quite a nice little place, isn't it, Eddie? For us to meet in? (*No reply, she sighs*). I like this cubicle arrangement . . . every table cubicked off, and against the wall, so private, nobody listening . . .

Spillane: (*Hoarsely*). What brought you back?

Mona: Oh—oh. So sudden. I always balk at sudden questions. Let's wait for a few moments . . . what was I saying? Ah yes, your friend . . . that young man . . . I suppose he knows all about me. Seemed rather stiff and unbending. But, about this place . . . we have been here, haven't we? Though not on hard and separate chairs. I distinctly remember a plush-covered sofa-like seat, two could sit on it, or even three if another was wanted. One day I distinctly remember we sat for hours on a red plush

sofa. We were silly youngsters, watching people pass in and out laughing about them, and sometimes not watching, but forgetting completely about the people. Do you remember?

Spillane: Thoughts of the past never move me. (*From height*).

Mona: (*Sighs*). You haven't yet poured out the tea.

Spillane: Help yourself . . . (*Sounds of cup, etc., pushed across*). That'll be better.

Mona: I think this tea is cold you know.

Spillane: Couldn't be, she has only just brought it.

Mona: I find things are served to you often in a very chilly manner.

Spillane: What is the meaning of this visit?

Mona: I thought after all three years is a long time apart, mightn't we come together? (*With feeling piercing through her lightness*). Were you pleased, or in any way affected when you heard I was coming? I turned it over in my mind . . . would you be angry or happy . . . or even perhaps a little excited. I knew of course Tim Farrell would tell you. Hateful creature. Constitutes himself a go-between. What do we want with those sort of people . . . you and I?

Spillane: It isn't a question of coming together but whether I'll allow you back. At the moment I find I can't afford it.

Mona: Have you no money?

Spillane: None whatsoever.

Mona: What a pity. You might have known that I'd come back. You should have known me. What were you doing. Did you make no effort? No preparations? How could we go on living without one another? (*This last a desperate plea*).

Spillane: If you had come sooner?

Mona: I was certain you'd come to me. I couldn't believe it when you didn't . . . after all I had had a hard time with you. When we first married you were writing, I was acting. And we were both so full of promise . . . but you ruined it, with your habits. People wondered that I stuck by you—but I kept hoping . . . then at last it petered out.

Spillane: Go away Mona. (*Gently*). It's far better. I live in one room.

Mona: Drinking are you?

Spillane: Drinking and betting.

Mona: I want to be supported for a little while.

Spillane: Supported. Are you not acting.

Mona: What are you doing since we parted?

Spillane: Since you ran away from me I've lived as I always lived before . . . except that I gave up the house.

Mona: You've had work sometimes for a week or so, but more often you walk about the park.

Spillane: (*On dignity*). I take my papers to the park on fine days sometimes.

Mona: And spot winners.

Spillane: Downright cheeky as ever. It's your fault the way things are. Your extravagance drove me to betting. Your temper, your disgraceful conduct, your continual . . .

Mona: (*Flying out*). My temper. Hadn't I reason? You were perfectly awful, quite unbearable, you got violent . . .

Spillane: Insolent, jeering, no understanding, always wanting admiration.

Mona: I never got it. Supposed to love me. You never gave me a moment's thought, gave me only endless trouble. Going always your own way. That was all your love brought me . . . endless worry.

Spillane: We were full of promise. Well, here we are.

Mona: A one-time writer, gone to seed . . . (*Quietened now*).

Spillane: And an actress. (*Pause*). Take your tea.

Mona: No, I don't want it. I was wanting only to talk to you. I don't know why you got angry. (*Tremulous*). I've missed you badly.

Spillane: (*After an instant*). Some months ago I read a notice about you: seems you made no end of a hit in a leading part . . . I forget the play . . . somewhere in the North you were.

Mona: You saw that. I was going to send the cutting to you . . . but thought perhaps you wouldn't read it, and then 't would be lost.

Spillane: It . . . er . . . gave me pleasure.

Mona: Eddie, they were terrible people, those provincial players I was with. Quite appalling. They didn't know the first thing about acting . . . but thought themselves perfect. (*A little laugh from him, she continues with growing confidence and friendliness*). I was silly to sign on with them, but when you have to. . . At first they were very nice . . . considerate for me, but after a bit they put on airs. 'Little upstarts . . . giving out. When you can act you do expect some recognition. I couldn't stand them, one day I told them exactly what I thought, said out all I felt about them. After that they didn't want me. They wouldn't have me stay for even one night longer. I had to leave at once. Wasn't that awful? I might have been stranded. We were playing in a god-forsaken town. . .

Spillane: Awful. . . for you. (*Quietly*) Then, what happened?

Mona: I started classes. A school of acting. . . that went well in the beginning. But teaching is most terribly monotonous. And I got very few interesting pupils. After a while even they fell off. In the end there was no one left, so I joined another company.

Spillane: Another. . . touring?

Mona: Yes, but that wasn't suitable either. They never saw my side of the question. At first I was pleased, and they seemed to like me. But very quickly things got unpleasant. I could see they were trying to make me say I'd leave. One day I overheard the manager talking—"her acting doesn't compensate"—then he

saw me, so I don't know what he was going to say. But you see they didn't like me. (*Childlike*) I saw things very clearly then. . .

Spillane: What did you do?

Mona: I tried to get your address that night. I wrote to you. But couldn't chance the post office reading all I said.. Perhaps that was your reason for not writing to me? (*With longing*) One doesn't like chancing letters that matter.

Spillane: I think we'll have a fresh pot, Mona.

Mona: No! My letter, I kept it for you. I have it here. Show, my bag won't open. The clasp's caught. . . the zip fastener. Help me, will you. . . hold it there. That way please while I pull. . . (*A cup scrapes sharply on the table, a bowl overturns*) Oh! How could you! Such a mess! You have got nervous. . . (*Angrily*) so simple a thing . . . opening a bag. . . helping me, but I shouldn't upset you. . . (*Assuming contempt*)

Spillane: You're wasting your time, and mine as well. (*Low, angry*)

Mona: If I could only get the bag open.

Spillane: You'll be able. . . at the right moment.

Mona: Horrid of you. So cutting. (*A gulp. . . a change of voice*) Eddie, don't you want me back?

Spillane: I will let you know tomorrow morning.

Mona: Oh. . . oh. (*Dashed*) You must think it over?

Spillane: There are complications. . .

Mona: You're working in Carlton's office. So I'm told.

Spillane: Finished with them.

Mona: Are you? So soon?

Spillane: A few days more. I got notice this morning. . . it wasn't. . . suitable at all. I had to go out every morning, across the city to the sub office. . . I. . . didn't go direct. I delayed.

Mona: For a drink?

Spillane: A mistake. . . on my part. . . things got lost, papers and dockets.

Mona: They might have given you a second chance.

Spillane: Oh, they did that. It happened . . . more than once.

Mona: In two weeks.

Spillane: Now, since you won't have tea, you'd better be going. (*Voice of suffering as saying "you know how bad I am"*)

Mona: I think I'll stay. Why are you looking always towards the door? Ah, the race. Stupid of me. I might have known. And young Mr. Moran is to bring the word. . . I'm hoping also for a winner.

Spillane: What are you on? (*As if drawn against his will*)

Mona: Put a small thing on "Alma's Glory."

Spillane: Mine.

Mona: No! (*Fellowship*)

Spillane: (*Suddenly breaking*) I. . . put all I have on her.

Mona: All you have. Dear me, wasn't that foolish?

Spillane: A sure thing.

Mona: I was told very uncertain. But it needn't matter so very much today.

Spillane: It matters. . . more than ever today. (*Voice trembles*)

Mona: (*After an instant's pause*) Do you remember Billy Carr?

Spillane: No.

Mona: A nice man: he was very fond of me. I liked him too. He died lately. (*Speaking nervously now*)

Spillane: I read of his death in the paper.

Mona: I was sorry. Very decent. He left me some money.

Spillane: Billy Carr?

Mona: I thought that very sweet of him. Not a terrible lot, but (*With sudden intensity—throwing off all covering of feeling*) Eddie, enough for us. . . you and me. We have enough to live on now. (*Charged with anxiety, hope and fear as to how this will be taken*) Of course if we earned a little that would help.

Spillane: When did you hear of this? (*Tight-voiced.*)

Mona: I got it this morning, have it here, came to tell you. It's O.K. Now we can . . .

(*Chair pushed out suddenly.*)

Spillane: No. This can't be, Mona . . . you can't come back (*Trembling*).

Mona: You've called attention to us . . . standing up. Do please sit down again. That's better. But she's coming, must have been watching and is curious now. (*Sound of Alice coming*). The bill please . . . pot for three. We didn't have any cakes.

Alice: But there's one gone. It must have been Mr. Moran.

Mona: I'm sorry . . . thank you!

Spillane: (*In laboured tone*). Miss Coleman waits on me always . . . great friends. This is my . . . is Mona Pewitt

Alice: I know the name well, leastways I think so, like I read it somewhere.

Mona: Might have seen me on the stage . . . comedy actress.

Alice: I go mostly to the pictures.

Spillane: I was certain Moran would be back by now.

Alice: Right enough, he told me too he'd be back in a few minutes. Someone calling over there. (*Going*).

Mona: So now, Eddie, we can start again . . .

Spillane: If "Alma's Glory" wins . . . (*Low*).

Mona: (*Beseechingly*). You're not going to refuse to share this with me. This . . . coming now . . . what we have always longed for . . .

Spillane: (*With a break*) Why didn't you come back sooner?

Mona: We'll make up for all that. I was foolish. I'll be better. I hope you will. (*This last with archness of tone.*)

Spillane: I . . . might. (*A little half laugh of joy from both*).

Mona: So here we are. (*Their voices are very low, as people close to one another across a table*).

Spillane: Nobody like you . . . for me . . . ever.

IRISH WRITING

Mona: Oh, my dear . . . Your hands: your lovely hands. (*Steps coming then they stop*). (*In sudden alarm*). Who are those men? Don't look round for a minute. Two men have come up and they're standing over there, behind the screens . . . one at each side. They're watching you.

Spillane: (*Very low*). Do they look like detectives, Mona?

Mona: Yes . . . but why— (*Then in waking terror*). Eddie you didn't put more than you have on the race?

Spillane: Yes.

Mona: You . . . took it?

Spillane: Borrowed . . . ten pounds from the office.

Mona: Oh . . .

Spillane: I meant . . . when I won . . .

Mona: I know.

Spillane: I didn't think it could have been discovered so very soon.

Mona: How quietly they came.

Spillane: They're waiting?

Mona: Yes, they're waiting . . . my dear they see you're not trying to get away. Is there nothing we can do?

Spillane: Nothing. Keep that letter for me, Mona, that letter you wrote. Show it to me some other time.

Mona: (*Very low*). I will.

Alice: (*Hurries over*). Oh, Mr. Spillane, these men—I don't know what it means . . . but they . . . they want you, and if you could go at once. Ah! (*Relieved*). Here's Ted.

Spillane: What news Moran?

Ted: No luck . . . also ran.

Spillane: They're coming. I'd better go over to them, Mona. Don't worry. Good about Billy Carr.

Mona: Better about you and me.

Ted: (*Puzzled*). What's this, Spillane . . . what . . . ?

Spillane: My wife will tell you what it means . . . Mr. Moran will be a friend always Mona. (*Going*).

Alice: What do they want?

Mona: My husband took some money from Carlton's office. (*Then . . . with a sudden start*). But I have it. I can pay.

Ted: No good . . . no good now . . . if he borrowed from the office. Better not go over.

Mona: What are they saying? What are they . . . Oh . . . handcuffs. They shouldn't . . . that isn't . . .

Ted: Stay. Stay here. They always do that now . . . they must . . . because of the traffic . . . so easy to make a dash . . . only one hand . . . to the sergeant.

Alice: Well, I don't know at all what happened . . . but Mr. Spillane is an awfully nice man.

Mona: (*In a dead voice*). How quietly it happened . . .

Ted: I must cut back to the office . . . sorry. I'll see what can be done. Please count on me. This address. (*Goes*).

Alice: He's an awfully nice man, I always said it. You'd know he was a gentleman born. Ted said to me "he's the sort you'd get to like."

Mona: That's true.

Alice: Ted will do all he can you know. There'll be cigarettes and papers. They can get those before the trial.

Mona: (Slowly). Before the trial.

Alice: That's the way always.

Mona: Ten pounds.

Alice: That much. Did he . . . ?

Mona: What will that mean? What sentence? How long?

Alice: I don't know. I don't know at all. Ted would. It might be six months perhaps. (Then angrily). All because of "Alma's Glory".

Mona: Yes.

Alice: They have no sense at all, men haven't.

Mona: I think we've got something this time . . . I don't mean money . . . but something that goes beyond.

Alice: Beyond this . . . business?

Mona: (To herself). Yes, beyond this. (Then in changed tone). I must put an ad. into the evening paper.

Alice: Ted would get it in for you I'm sure.

Mona: I should know the rates . . . how many words . . . (Then tapping lightly, counting). "Mona Pewitt . . . comedy actress". No. "Mona Pewitt seeks engagement . . . for six months. Might be longer . . . might be indefinite. (Tries to laugh, sobs instead . . . then gives a cough). Don't mind me. I have a cough, that's all. People calling you . . . over there

Alice: Let them wait. Do you want me?

Mona: No. I'm going . . . (gets up). Thanks for kindness and all that. See you sometime. (Her steps going. Alice hurries over to another table).

1st Woman: Waitress. What was he arrested for?

Alice: Oh, I don't know at all . . . I couldn't tell you.

2nd Woman: I heard he had pinched a few pounds.

Alice: That might be.

1st Woman: Who is the actress he was with?

Alice: That's his wife. They call her Mona Pewitt . . . Hard luck on her though, isn't it?

1st Woman: If she's really his wife . . . with these people you never know . . . or she may be hand and glove with him in robbing.

Alice: (Slowly). He's the kind of man I'd be afraid of my life to see much of.

2nd Woman: (Thrilled). You would.

Alice: There's nothing you'd like to refuse him.

1st Woman: My goodness . . . always with these sort of people.

2nd Woman: I was told he's a bad lot . . . that his wife had

left him. I believe no one could stand him, no one could live with him.

Alice: I know him only very little, coming in here for tea sometimes. You couldn't as much as put a cup before him but he'd like you.

1st Woman: Like you?

Alice: Well, in a manner of speaking, I mean. He'd have feeling for everyone he'd come across.

2nd Woman: I suppose that man and woman have something behind them.

Alice: I don't know . . . she said they had something between them . . . leastways she said something like that.

2nd Woman: Between them . . . You'd never know what that might mean.

Alice: I suppose you wouldn't. (*Gathers cups, etc.*) But . . . (*To herself as she goes*). I think I did know what she meant.

2nd Woman: What? What's that she said?

1st Woman: Ah, don't mind her. She's friendly with them.

2nd Woman: Huh.

JOYCE AND ALEXANDRIA

IT is a generation now since the publication of *Ulysses*, a decade after Joyce's death, and yet though most of the literary dust that he stirred up in his life has subsided, his significance in the history of our time is still unclear. For the average reader he remains the impressive but unread author of *Ulysses*, for his detractors he is as Dr. Gogarty once called him the anti-pope of literature, for his partisans he stands beyond time, a colossus with cosmic attributes. In his unpublished letter to the *Times* after Joyce's death, T. S. Eliot, who had given Joyce the accolade of Classicist, summed up the uncertainty of the literary era of which he and Joyce had been two of the pontiffs. 'To some of Joyce's younger contemporaries, like myself,' he wrote, '*Ulysses* still seems the most considerable work of imagination in English in our time . . . I do not believe that posterity will be able to controvert this judgement, though it may be able to demonstrate the relative insignificance of the literary achievement of the whole period'.

Finnegans Wake with its contrived artifact language that goes far beyond *Ulysses* in the disintegration of normal speech, is held by coterie critics to be the apocalyptic culmination of Joyce's work. Eugene Jolas, who published the successive fragments of *Finnegans Wake* as *Work in Progress*, asserted in regard to it that 'when the beginnings of this new age are seen in perspective it will be found that the disintegration of words, and their subsequent reconstruction on other planes, constitute some of the most important acts of our epoch'.

A recent volume on Joyce in a series dealing with the influential thinkers of the last hundred years places him on a level with Darwin, Einstein, Freud and Marx. Yet, but for the world notoriety of what the *Pink 'Un* called 'The Scandal of *Ulysses*', *Finnegans Wake* would have found neither publisher nor readers and Joyce's work would be as forgotten to-day as that of the lesser contributors to *The Yellow Book*. As Herbert Gorman later said, the effect of the publication of *Ulysses* in 1922 was like dynamite in the literary world. Analyzing the phenomenon, critics have failed to note its inevitability. *Ulysses*, whatever its other claims, stands out as the classic of revolt in the intellectual climate of the post-war period. By the logic of events it or something similar to it was bound to be written. If it had appeared fifteen years earlier it would have been uncomprehended, while fifteen years later it would have lost much of its sting and become almost commonplace. As it was *Ulysses* exactly fitted the repudiating Zeitgeist of the 'twenties.

The artist in revolt is often closer to his Hegelian time-spirit

than is the artist who accepts the weight of tradition. Professor Lowes in his *Convention and Revolt in Poetry* limited the study to formal verse but what he has written of poetry applies equally to all the arts: 'Revolt in poetry is not a wind that blows aloof and fitfully along the upper reaches of the air. It is bound up with the general ebb and flow of attractions and repulsions which go to make up life. And it is never amiss to begin by scrutinizing life, when one is questioning the ways of poetry.'

The artist, the inventor and the scientist are equally sensitive to the intellectual ferment of their times; each is able to extract what he needs from it for his particular task, to sense the potentiality of the future and that by so doing to help bring about its actualization in the present. In the field of applied mechanics Thomas Edison invented among other things the electric light and the phonograph. Yet when he was young such devices were floating in a kind of collective time-consciousness, invisible but just around the corner. If Edison had never lived, some one else before long would have contrived the incandescent lamp and some spatial method of recording sound. Two generations before the Hitler epoch Nietzsche sensed that ominous shadow. It is no belittling of Einstein's genius to say that if he had not evolved his theory of relativity some one else would have done so by this time.

So it was with *Ulysses* in 1922. In the transvaluations brought about by the 1914-18 cataclysm its effects would inevitably be felt in the literary world. There is always a time-lag between the evolution of scientific and philosophic theories and their somewhat less exact application to literature. Freud and Bergson as part of the intellectual current of the twentieth century had not yet had a full-bodied literary incarnation. Under their influence, in a decade of self-conscious disillusionment, somebody was certain to write a book in defiance of the traditions of the established world of letters, that would reflect the psychological theories of the Viennese school, and using the stream of consciousness technique. Such a book, exploring the non-logical roots of consciousness, would almost by necessity affront the current language taboos.

The Anglo-Saxon monosyllables to describe the excretory and sexual functions of the body are still used generally in common speech, although they fell out of polite use and written form with the introduction to the language of Latin-derived substitutes. We find some of them occurring in Chaucer, one at least in the Authorized Version, in disemvowelled form in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and they were completely banned only with the rise of the bourgeoisie in the Victorian era. This censorship persisted though weakened through the first two decades of the twentieth century—Joyce himself found his use of the word 'bloody' taken exception to in *Dubliners* in 1912. Eventually it would be challenged in the postwar period. As it happened the challenge was made by two authors of very different intent. D. H. Lawrence who in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* made a puritanical effort to remove

the salacious connotations of the monosyllables and restore them to their pre-conquest innocence, and Joyce in *Ulysses* who used the banned forms with a detachment that did not quite succeed in avoiding self-consciousness.

The sexual episodes and the use of the monosyllables in the bewildering uncomprehended bulk of *Ulysses* set off the scandal. Not since *Jude The Obscure* had there been such an outcry against a book, and a comparison of the two is an indication of how the literary atmosphere had changed within Hardy's overlapping lifetime. To-day, when the barriers between colloquial and literary speech are much less well defined, when *Ulysses* is on the reserve shelf of most women's colleges and Joyce exegesis has become a vested interest, it is difficult to apprehend that violent mood of the early 'twenties when the book for awhile seemed to have become all things to all men. The established world of letters, uneasy in an era of change and fearing for the accepted scale of values, felt with Shane Leslie that *Ulysses* was a kind of literary Bolshevism. Alfred Noyes found it 'the foulest book that has found its way into print'. Paul Elmer More viewed it with anti-optic disgust. For Sir Edmund Gosse, Joyce's writings were 'worthless and impudent . . . a perfectly cynical appeal to sheer indecency'.

By the older professors in the universities Joyce was scarcely ever mentioned, but to the younger men, restive under the shadow of a tradition no longer vital for them, *Ulysses* was a welcome explosive to demolish the fusty academic structure. The book became a potent means of challenging the genteel tradition. It was, according to the Joyce cult that quickly grew up, a Bible and Koran for all would-be writers. Joyce was the master stylist of the English language in whom all the styles of the past coalesced and English literary history culminated. *Ulysses* became the shibboleth of the New Freedom.

It was more than a book, it was a movement. Among his partisans Joyce early assumed the messianic rôle he himself claimed. From the time he reached maturity he had had no real existence outside his writing. The significant part of his life ended on 16th June, 1904, the day in which the action of *Ulysses* takes place and which he celebrated as an anniversary in after years. Standing outside contemporary life, like Balzac his characters became more real to him than real people. Unlike Balzac he confused the Byzantine intricacies of his technique with the primal act of creation. According to Stuart Gilbert, who wrote his commentary on *Ulysses* in collaboration with Joyce and who reflected Joyce's own opinion, '*Ulysses* is a book of life, the life of a microcosm which is a small-scale replica of the universe, and the methods which lead to an understanding of the latter will provide a solution of the obscurities in *Ulysses*'. This statement is typical of the Joyce exegesis of the period. Why or how an understanding of *Ulysses* would bring us closer to the enigma of the universe is never explained. It is

pronounced like a fiat. Later on Mr. Gilbert compares *Ulysses* to a 'great net let down from heaven including in the infinite variety of its take the magnificent and the petty, the holy and the obscene, inter-related, mutually symbolic. . . . In this banal day in the life of an inglorious Dubliner, we may discover an entire synthesis of the macrocosm and a compelling symbol of the history of the race'. For Mr. Gilbert as for the coterie round Joyce at the time the flat assertion seemed sufficient proof of its truth. Elsewhere Mr. Gilbert speaks of Joyce as 'viewing the Cosmos with the eye of God'. S. Foster Damon in his article in the *Hound and Horn* identified the Mr. Bloom of *Ulysses* with Christ and Joyce-Daedalus with Satan, an identification that delighted Joyce who when he left Ireland as an unknown young man dramatized himself romantically as Lucifer, the son of morning. Marcel Brion states in *An Examination of Work in Progress* that 'in *Ulysses* and still more in *Work in Progress* we seem to be present at the birth of a world'. Robert Sage claims for Joyce's writings that 'he has embraced the world, heaven, hell and the celestial bodies. . . . He has telescoped time, space, all humanity and the universe of gods and heroes'.

In the seventeen-year interval between the publication of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* Joyce had become academically acceptable, no longer Lucifer trailing fire but a mandarin of the contemporary literary scene, his name familiar even to the many who had not read his books. There was something old-fashioned, slightly pathetic about those who still challenged his position. *Finnegans Wake*, however, caused no such scandal as *Ulysses*. The latter shocked by its bluntness of expression, the former bewildered. As Joyce in *Ulysses* tried to weave together the myriad threads of a single Dublin day, so in *Finnegans Wake* he attempted to compass the dream-unity of a Dublin publican during a night's sleep. *Finnegans Wake* is written in an artificial language intended to reproduce the vague fitfully-conscious world of dreams. Because of its rejection of conventional English speech—a process foreshadowed in *Ulysses*, but carried on here even to the tentative disintegration of the alphabet—the book was not comprehensible except to the initiate. It seemed at first a more poetic version of Esperanto, richer in tone, with echoes of music and onomatopoeic associations, but lacking Esperanto's logical syntax. During the previous decade parts of it had appeared in *transition* accompanied by various commentaries and elucidations that owed most of their substance to verbal hints from the author. Edmund Wilson, in his essay on *Finnegans Wake* admitted that without the explanations offered in *transition* it would be doubtful if anyone could get the hang of the book. *Work in Progress*, like a tantalizing enigma, kept Joyce in the eye of the intellectual public. *Finnegans Wake* after a decade of pre-publication 'gossip' became the most advertised book in advance since *Nana*.

Doughty, after *Arabia Deserta* appeared, was accused of using,

the English language as if he had found it lying around loose. Joyce used it as if he were reconstructing the shattered glass of a mediaeval cathedral, often with dazzling colour and effect but with the old formal pattern lost. Mr. Wilson describes this language as consisting of 'words and sentences which, though they seem to be gibberish or nonsense from the rational point of view, betray by their telescopings of words and their combinations of ideas, the involuntary preoccupations of the sleeper'.

If *Ulysses* was a scandal, *Finnegans Wake* was a mystification. Its portmanteau words, gleanings from a dozen languages, and strange syllabic combinations rising up like hippogriffs through the pages were grafted on to the structure of a minor baroque philosopher's doctrine of eternal recurrence plus a Nordic mythus contrived by Joyce himself. To the unprepared layman picking up the book for the first time it seemed to resemble one of those freak publications that from time to time are printed by wealthy schizophrenics. Joyce's brother Stanislaus who had shared the earlier years of his brother's exile in Trieste, returned his gift copy as a gesture of protest. Nevertheless *Finnegans Wake* was a richer field for exegesis even than *Ulysses*. What Joyce's readers lost in mass they gained in intensity. The claims for this last book were even more cosmic than for *Ulysses*, and Joyce the author became increasingly identified with a creator possessing divine attributes.

To Joyce's followers he was the Logos. Samuel Beckett in *An Examination of Work in Progress* made the high claim that 'Joyce's writing is not *about* something; it is that something itself'. A reviewer in the *New English Review* considered *Finnegans Wake* the most important work since the last great religious books. He went on to assert that 'if anyone were to imagine the language which the dead speak when stirred or troubled, their drowsy talk would resemble the words used in *Finnegans Wake*. Words echoing with many meanings, visionary revelations, profane experiences, and dark magic; they often seem to come from beyond the edges of earthly life. . . . This clown's book which teaches us to descend the comic steps into hell, where Christ's truth is hidden, requires that sad and wise understanding of what is tragic and outside history'.

Two research workers, Joseph Campbell and Henry Morton Robinson, spent the war years in fashioning a key to *Finnegans Wake*, and their study—almost as long as the original—contains both a running commentary and paraphrasings into conventional English. Later scholiasts have claimed that the Campbell-Robinson work is a misinterpretation. However, although suffering from the authors' lack of first-hand knowledge of Ireland it is probably as long and painstaking a work as will be produced on the subject. If it is inaccurate it will be hard to expect accuracy anywhere. *Finnegans Wake* may eventually draw forth as many commentaries

as certain end products of the Alexandrian school, but there will never be a fixed canon.

For Messrs. Campbell and Robinson, *Finnegans Wake* is 'a kind of terminal moraine in which lie buried all the myths, programmes, slogans, hopes, prayers, tools, educational theories, and theological bric-a-brac of the past millenium'.

Whatever its value as interpretation, *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake* is a summing up of the various deific claims made for Joyce. 'What, finally is *Finnegans Wake* all about?' Messrs. Campbell and Robinson ask. And their answer is: 'Stripping away its accidental features, the book may be said to be all compact of mutually supplementary antagonisms: male-and-female, age-and-youth, life-and-death, love-and-hate; these, by their attractions, conflicts, repulsions, supply the solar energies that spin the universe. . . . James Joyce presents, develops, amplifies and recondenses nothing more or less than the eternal dynamic implicit in birth, conflict, death and resurrection.'

In *A Skeleton Key*, as in so much Joyce criticism we find again the ex cathedra pronouncement: 'Besides being a Dream Confessional, *Finnegans Wake* is also a Treasury of Myth. Myths, like dreams, are an upworking of the unconscious mind—and Western scholarship has recently become aware of their essential homogeneity throughout the world. *Finnegans Wake* is the first literary instance of myth utilization on a universal scale. Other writers—Dante, Bunyan, Goethe—employed mythological symbolism, but their images were drawn from the reservoirs of the West. *Finnegans Wake* has tapped the universal sea.'

Mr. Campbell, contributing to a later compilation of essays on Joyce, sees *Finnegans Wake* as a sealed revelation containing 'a prodigious anonymity of feeling, indifferent alike to vice and virtue. A readiness to permit not only civilizations, but the universe, galaxies of universes, to be generated and annihilated in the wheeling rounds of time, is the sign of the apocalypse of this trans-humanistic biologico-astronomical revelation'.

The extraordinary value placed on *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* by an originally small circle of critics and the later wide acceptance of such far-reaching claims among intellectuals is as significant for the era as for the books themselves. Whatever one's feelings as to Joyce's permanent literary value he holds an important place in the cultural history of our time. Writing of *Ulysses*, Professor Levin, in perhaps the most balanced study of Joyce to date, aptly summed this up: 'The immediate qualities which make it (*Ulysses*) so poignant an expression of the modern mind, for most readers, are chaos, dissonance and obscurity.' Why these particular qualities should so appeal to the contemporary time-spirit cannot be answered finally within the same cultural period. Indeed such a question is only formulated at that stage of a culture when it becomes introspective and uncertain of itself, when literary production tends to become increasingly hermetic and esoteric

criticism to flourish. In this connection Dr. Freud's references to originality in science are equally pertinent to literature. 'Many interesting comments', he writes, 'may be made about what appears to be scientific originality. When for instance a new idea appears in science, that is, an idea which is at first considered new and, as a rule, attacked as such, an objective research soon proves that it is not really so novel. Usually, the discovery has already been made, repeatedly, often at periods far apart, and has fallen into oblivion.'

Although they may be superficially altered by the accidents of geography and language, literary movements tend basically to repeat themselves within similar cultural periods. It is not possible to determine with any exactitude why chaos, dissonance and obscurity draw so much emotional response from the modern mind. Most of the reasons given are rationalizations, but we can at least examine past eras that bear a resemblance to our own. Perhaps the closest parallel with the intellectual atmosphere since the end of the first World War is to be found in Alexandria of the third century B.C. There the same triad of chaos, dissonance and obscurity flourished within the limits of the clique about the Alexandrian Library. It is true that Theocritus, the greatest poet of that self-absorbed age, stood outside the coteries, but he was a pastoral anachronism. More typical of the period was Callimachus, an enigmatic but genuine poet who could at times capture the music of incantation as well as Theocritus, yet who for the most part occupied himself with the intricate narration of esoteric legends in what Professor Wright has called a desperate desire to be original. Then there were lesser and more wilfully obscure poets like Dosiadas and Euphorion who founded schools of criticism on the basis of their pedantry. Of all the Alexandrian coterie poets, the most enigmatic was Lycophron, who was called even by his contemporaries *skoteinós* the dark one. In his surviving work, the *Alexandra*, one finds a startling parallel with the latter work of Joyce, from the assumption of the pseudo-epic form to the use of a fabricated language.

Alexandria in the age of Lycophron was the greatest commercial city in the world, a metropolis of culture superseding the small Greek city-states, sophisticated, urbane, detached, and at the same time permeated with inner doubt. The bonds of the older Greek tradition had been broken, but the end result was enervation rather than freedom. Art became eclectic and the artist, free to borrow from the Egyptian, the Asiatic or the Minoan according to his taste, found himself increasingly hampered by frustration and impotence. It was a period of dissolving beliefs and shifting standards, as Charles Kingsley called it, 'a generation of innumerable court poets, artificial epigrammatists, artificial idyllists, artificial dramatists and epicists; above all a generation of critics'.

Literary movements followed each other in waves, one moment at their crest, the next shattered on the beach. Character-

eristic of all these movements however was their remoteness from the general public. Their glyptic lines and involved thought-patterns were not intended for those who liked the simple music of Homer. The poets of this period formed an exclusive society writing for each other and for a limited group of cultured amateurs. Each coterie praised itself and attacked its predecessors. There were symbolists, enigmatists, super-realists, pattern poets who wrote verses on the objects described—such as a shepherd's pipe or an egg. Religion and patriotism had become too archaic as subject matter; the epic involved insuperable difficulties. Poets for the most part could no longer sustain a long theme. They preferred epigrams or the brief epic-inspired poems called Epyllion.

As poetry became unreadable except for the Library clique, the general public took to light reading, books not unlike the best sellers of the present, as well as simplified outlines of science and history. Poets like Euphorion and Lycophron found themselves increasingly restive within the limitations of the language they had inherited, and to extend the last subtle essence of their meaning they began to break down the inner structure of language and reform it after some inner pattern of their own. The cliques approved. For to understand these poets at all was to set one's self apart as a cultural initiate. As Professor Couat explained: 'No initiation is without its mystery; the Alexandrian poets like to have their meaning guessed at rather than understood; they do not surrender the key to their erudite language at first reading; occasionally we recognize them by the very fact that they are unintelligible.'

The great distinction of the Alexandrian age, its permanent contribution, was in the fields of mathematics and science. It was the age of specialists, of Euclidean geometry, of spectacular advances in medicine and astronomy. Such abstruse sciences, demanding a lifetime of concentrated application, were without influence on poetry. The poets, from what they considered their higher sphere of vision, looked down on such men as Euclid and Archimedes. Just as between poetry and practical life, the divorce between science and poetry was complete, and poetry thrown back on itself began to eat its own words.

Lycophron, because he expresses the tendencies of the Alexandrian school in their most extreme form, and because his *Alexandra* through its stubborn obscurity has survived, is the most representative literary figure of the period. Like Joyce he is a focal point of his age. Just as much of Joyce's work that has found response in our era will be incomprehensible to future periods, so the effect that Lycophron had on his contemporaries is lost to us. We know that he did have such an effect, we have the enigmatic bulk of the *Alexandra* to prove it to us. But we know little of his life. Joyce's we know in detail. If we knew more of Lycophron we could no doubt trace his life sequence in his work, just as we can in Joyce; and as the end result was similar we might expect

the pattern of both men to be roughly the same.

The pattern of Joyce's life is an arithmetic progression from simplicity to a heavily shadowed multiplicity. In his early twenties he composed the transparent obvious verses of *Chamber Music*, pretty conventional *fin-de-siècle* rhymes such as a young member of the Rhymers' Club might have written. *Chamber Music* is the type of thin little book that many a young man of talent writes and has privately printed, and often writes no more. But Joyce with that intransigent egocentricity that is characteristic of many artists and most characteristic of him, claimed them to be the greatest lyrics since Shakespeare. He intended to conquer Dublin with his rhymes. In revolt against his poverty, his appalling family life, his Jansenistic religious background and his lack of recognition—although he had as yet done nothing to merit the latter—he felt he had been cheated of his birthright, the birthright of that still elegant upper middle-class ascendancy society whose image he was to recreate in the home environment of his later Parisian years.

George Moore, referred to ironically by Joyce as a 'genuine gent', was able to leave Ireland to work in London without bitterness. He felt too sure of his position in the world to question his surroundings. Joyce, when he first left Ireland for only half a year saw himself as an outcast, an exile. The pose of exile was his favourite form of self-dramatization; it was the title of his Ibsen-esque play in which he expressed his wish-fulfilments more directly and naïvely than in anything else he wrote. From Zurich, after he had left Ireland for the second time with the woman who twenty years later was to become his wife, he sent back to his Dublin acquaintances a bitter doggerel poem, *The Holy Office*, in which he visualized himself as Byron's Cain:

I stand the self-doomed, unafraid
Unfellowed, friendless and alone
Indifferent as the herring bone,
Firm as the mountain ridges where
I flash my antlers on the air . . .
And though they spurn me from their door
My soul shall spurn them evermore.

No doubt if Joyce had been born of an Irish family of wealth and position he would not have felt the same inner compulsion to revolt. In an article on Joyce and psychoanalytic theory, Frederick J. Hoffman noted the 'very striking correspondence between Joyce's shift to literary experiment and his spiritual renunciation of his earlier tradition'.

Joyce's first prose work, the collection of short stories he called *Dubliners* and which he characteristically announced as 'a chapter in the moral history of my country', are slight but acute sketches of no great depth, written in a traditional manner. In a letter to the publisher, Grant Richards, Joyce explained that he had written the stories in a 'style of scrupulous meanness'. Professor Levin has referred to them as 'the annals of frustration'. They are bitter

vignettes, written without heart and without feeling, except for the last story. This story, *The Dead*, alien in mood to the rest, Joyce wrote some time after the others. It has a compassion, a sympathetic almost tender understanding that one does not find elsewhere in Joyce. Although marred by its purplish ending it leaves one with a sense of wondering pity. Written without emphasis on technique it is a moving indication of what Joyce might have become if he had developed within the limits of conventional language.

There is a well-known passage in Joyce's revised autobiography, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, apparently an excerpt from his diary written shortly before his first trip to Paris, where he speaks of making his way using only the weapons at his command—silence, exile and cunning. 'I go', he wrote, 'to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge within my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.' As yet he had written nothing but *Chamber Music*. He was full of the hot resentment of a young man who believes passionately in himself and who has not yet developed the means to convince others. What he meant by this rhapsodic language was that he now intended to write the autobiography which exists in fragmentary form to-day as *Stephen Hero*. The uncreated conscience was no more than a foreshadowing of one of those autobiographical novels in which the Wertherish figure of a sensitive young man emerges from an unhappy childhood to a defiant adolescence and finally realizes his artistic mission when he leaves in the last chapter to write the book that the reader has just concluded. The 300,000 words of *Stephen Hero*, later to appear in a much modified and more mature form as *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, were what Joyce was to forge. If *Stephen Hero* had been promptly accepted by any of the twenty publishers who rejected it, if *Dubliners* or even *Chamber Music* had been acclaimed in Dublin, if Joyce had found himself famous overnight like the young Kipling, he might have made his peace with Ireland. When his first child was born in Trieste in 1905 he sent his father a mocking telegram: 'Son born. Mother and bastard doing well.' But, for all his bitterness, he was back in Dublin seven years later for the third time, dickering with Maunsel & Company who had agreed and were now reluctant to publish *Dubliners*. At thirty, approaching middle age, Joyce was still willing to accept Dublin, if Dublin would have him.

But Dublin would not. Maunsel's, after what must have been to Joyce agonizing delays, refused to publish *Dubliners* and destroyed the proofs. With that gesture all hope of reconciliation ended. Joyce abandoned and repudiated Ireland, the polite literary world and all that went with it. He had been rejected, and he would answer rejection with final defiance. Although *Dubliners* and the revised version of Joyce's autobiography were not to appear for another two years, his life course was now determined.

As Herbert Gorman noted in his semi-official biography of Joyce: 'His failure in Dublin had intensified the bitterness he felt towards that city and its inhabitants. He was convinced that a conspiracy to crush him completely existed amongst his former companions.' How he pictured himself at that period is clearly shown in his play, *Exiles*, where one of the characters melodramatically addresses the emigré writer, Richard Rowan—obviously Joyce himself: 'You have that fierce indignation which lacerated the heart of Swift. You have fallen from a higher world, Richard, and you are filled with fierce indignation when you find that life is cowardly or ignoble.'

Joyce's fiercest indignation was caused by the fact that he was not readily accepted at his own valuation. Years later, when *Ulysses* had made him famous and *Work in Progress* was appearing in brief extracts, an American critic asked him if he did not make too heavy demands on his readers. Joyce's reply was that the demand he made of his readers was that they should devote the whole of their lives to reading his works. That uncompromising assertion is again characteristic of Joyce.

Dr. Gogarty, smarting from his gross portrayal in *Ulysses*, called Joyce the Great Repudiator. He did repudiate all that bound him to a mean and hateful and dogmatic past—country, church and literary tradition—but he was to find that the past, even when repudiated, still dominated his life. The present never greatly concerned him after he left Ireland, and though he was to live away almost thirty years, his past there was still the one reality for him. Although his work would develop in astonishingly new paths, he himself remained rooted emotionally in Edwardian Dublin.

Joyce's first five books up to the publication of *Ulysses* are merely prolegomena. *Chamber Music* and *Stephen Hero* are obvious enough. *Exiles* though revealing is incidental. With *Dubliners* however one finds Joyce taking the first step in the strange progress that was to end in the convolutions of *Finnegans Wake*. In these short stories the syntax is clear but the plot withers away; there is mood rather than meaning. With *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce has commenced tentatively to experiment with language, and one finds the beginnings of that disintegration in syntax that in *Ulysses* is to be carried to such lengths. In the latter work sentences and sentence structure break away, subjective and objective impressions fade into each other, syntax is shattered. If words still retain their form with a few onomatopoetic exceptions, they alone survive. In *Finnegans Wake* the disintegration is complete; words have lost their old identity, dissolving and recombining as strange hybrids. There is even a beginning of the disintegration of the alphabet—a process afterwards carried to much greater extremes by Joyce's friend Ezra Pound in *The Pisan Cantos*.

August, 1914, found Joyce at work on the book that was to

make him known to the world, a task he was to continue with monomaniac concentration for seven years, oblivious to the tragedy of the war, feeding on his own bitterness as he quarried the unwieldy bulk of *Ulysses* out of the past. The defiant impulse that protested so thinly in *The Holy Office* had now found form and substance. *Ulysses* is, as Cyril Connolly said, still a young man's book, 'packed with the defeatism and guilt of youth, its loneliness, cynicism, pedantry and outburst of bawdy anarchic activity'. But in its expression the author has attained his angry maturity. Gilbert Seldes called it an epic of defeat. Professor Levin saw in the epic parallel a complete lack of the epic virtues of love, friendship and magnanimity.

Fortunately for Joyce's literary reputation his own inner nihilism corresponded with the outer nihilism of his age. *Ulysses* is the full-bodied expression of an anti-philosophy, and the instinctive understanding of this by Joyce's contemporaries accounts for much of the book's impact. Curtius called it *Luciferan*, a work of the Anti-Christ, and maintained as did Dr. Jung that a metaphysical void lay at the root of Joyce's work. Professor Levin saw no heavenly nets descending nor the secrets of the macrocosm suddenly revealed. 'A student', he wrote, 'who demands a philosophy from Joyce will be put off with an inarticulate noise and a shrug.'

Whatever Joyce's adaptation of myths and the use of the Viconian theory in his later works, he himself had no beliefs. He once remarked to Eugene Jolas that we know nothing and never shall know anything. For Joyce the universe was an impenetrable mystery ruled by blind chance, and human life had no purpose. There was neither God nor any rational substitute for God. At the same time Joyce had the impelling emotional need to assert himself, and as he had nothing else to cling to in a shifting universe he clung to the unalterability of past time. Like Proust he became obsessed with the past as the only fixed quality of existence.

Much in *Ulysses* is wilfully obscure, as if Joyce had turned his hatred of bourgeois Ireland and his years of poverty to a scorn of the reader; much is dull and pedantic, but for all its faults it is still a tremendous book. There are parts of it in which Joyce comes close to succeeding in the impossible task of recapturing a vanished day.

Just as Joyce's books are a progression from clarity to obscurity, so one finds the same sequence within *Ulysses* itself. The first three chapters are an exposition in which Joyce employs the stream of consciousness technique as a bridge between the mental and physical world. Such a technique, after its novelty wears off, can become one of the dulllest means of expression known, but Joyce uses it with surprising success. There is a supple dynamic strength to the movement of those opening pages. One sees as an almost tangible mental image the actuality of that summer morning in 1904, the fog-streaked air over the glaucous waters of

Dublin Bay, the mailboat leaving the Kingstown pier with the smoke from her funnel wisping out in the direction of the Howth Head, oyster catchers and herring gulls perched along the sand-bars, and the shimmer and glitter of the reflected sunlight on the old Martello tower as Buck Mulligan struts along the parapet, the breeze ruffling his dressing gown. From this opening chapter dominated by Mulligan's boisterous and jocose vulgarity to the chapters on Stephen Daedalus's walk along Sandycove Beach and Paddy Dignam's funeral as it makes its way through the long-vanished viceregal Dublin, one feels that Joyce has successfully conjured up the phantom of the past.

Joyce's basic device of using the *Odyssey* as a parallel gives him an integrated framework within which he can arrange his material, and as such it is successful. The failure of *Ulysses* comes with Joyce's egocentric pedantry that pushed parallels to such bizarre extremes that the work became a vast mosaic of conflicting symbols. According to Mr. Gilbert, 'each episode of *Ulysses* has its Scene and Hour of the Day, is (with the exception of the first three episodes) associated with a given Organ of the human body, relates to a certain Art, has its appropriate Symbol and specific Technique. Each episode has also a title, corresponding to a personage or episode of the *Odyssey*. Certain episodes have also their appropriate colour.'

Such verbal by-plays add to the mystification of the reader, but it is difficult to see what else they accomplish either in depth of understanding or clarification. It is of little advantage to the reader to know that the paragraph before him reproduces the peristaltic action of the stomach, that several pages of words juxtaposed apparently without order or sequence mimic the effects of musical notation, or that a long chapter on the birth of a child is written in the parodied styles of several dozen authors, to illustrate the evolution of the English language from the womb of Anglo-Saxon. *Ulysses* as it continues loses its clearness and becomes a web spun by stubborn egotism and woven by unbalanced pedantry.

Joyce has, as several critics have noted, combined the two diverse currents of naturalism and symbolism, but the combination is not a synthesis. Throughout *Ulysses* he strikes off bright sparks of naturalism that glow and flicker out in the brackish waters of his symbolist obsession. Many fragments and partial episodes are successful—the Gertie MacDowell interlude written in the circulating library style of the 'nineties, Father Conmee's walk, bathos used as an effective medium in the far too prolonged incident in the cabman's shelter. Much of the Walpurgisnacht scene in the brothel is brilliant, but again Joyce mars the effect with his relentless piling up of fantastic detail and his lack of balance. Mrs. Bloom's soliloquy is a remarkable *tour de force*, though the lucubrations of a somewhat promiscuous lower middle-class Dublin housewife are scarcely what Joyce maintained them

to be, 'the voice of Gaea-Tellus, the Great Mother speaking . . . the goddess whom the Romans invoked by sinking their arms downward to the earth.'

Joyce's ground plan of *Ulysses* is as involved as a Swiss calendar watch, and as in the latter, use is lost sight of in ingenuity. Just as he compared his first lyrics with those of Shakespeare, so in *Ulysses* he placed himself on a level with Homer and the source of all poetry. Mr. Gilbert expresses Joyce's Luciferan self-esteem when he announces that 'James Joyce is, in fact, in the line of classical tradition that begins with Homer; like his precursors he subjects his work, for all its wild vitality and seeming disorder, to a rule of formal discipline as severe as that of the Greek dramatists; indeed the "unities" of *Ulysses* go far beyond the classic triad. they are manifold and withal symmetrical as the daedal network of nerves and blood streams which prevade the living organism'.

In *Ulysses* and even more in *Finnegans Wake* Joyce did in fact create a most elaborate pseudo-mythological crossword puzzle to which only he could ever furnish the complete key. From his basic disbelief he somehow assumed in his word-games semi-divine qualities. Like Lycophron in Alexandria, by evolving his own mythus and his means of expression he succeeded in creating a baffling mock-epic, a learned conundrum for scholiasts to explore.

In spite of the obscurities of *Ulysses* its bitterness is evident enough. Joyce in his seven years' labour had managed among other things to pay off the old scores of two decades. Now between the blue covers of his finally published book he took his revenge on all those who had crossed him, from Dr. Gogarty and his other Dublin acquaintances to an obstinate and obscure British Consulate official Joyce met in Zurich a dozen years later. The 'Kartharsis-Purgative' he had vainly asserted in *The Holy Office* he found at last in *Ulysses*.

At the age of forty he had achieved the position in the world that he had demanded at twenty. He had attained recognition, a fame tinged with notoriety, and, through the generosity of a woman admirer, what was no less important—financial independence. Savage* introspection no longer lacerated his heart. In his flat in a fashionable quarter in Paris he surrounded himself with old family portraits, those estimable evidences of continuity so dear to the Anglo-Irish ascendancy. When Cyril Connolly visited him during the 'twenties he almost always found Joyce wearing the white blazer and gold-threaded crest of an obscure Dublin cricket club he had belonged to as a young man. He enjoyed the long-deferred luxury of living the kind of life he felt was due to him, which, according to Mr. Connolly, was 'that of a well-to-do high priest of art, remote from equals and competitors, and not too accessible to admirers.'

On finishing *Ulysses* Joyce was faced with the common artis-

tic problem of what to do next. By writing the most complex novel of his day, by breaking with the customary rules of exposition, syntax and logic, he had placed himself outside the bounds of conventional criticism. Neither the detractors nor the admirers of *Ulysses* could apply the usual standards to it. So, for the former the book became a manifesto of anarchy and for the latter a new revelation. If Joyce, after *Ulysses*, had retreated to the inherited clarity of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* the hostile critics would have fallen on him. To retain his Olympian position above criticism his only course was to stay beyond criticism. From *Ulysses* he moved on to the gigantic anagram that is *Finnegans Wake*.

For seventeen years he spent his time elaborating that many-layered labyrinth, creating both myth and language in the process. The myth, unlike the *Ulysses* parallel, was a cosmic one of his own contriving, based roughly on Vico's doctrine of recurrence. As Professor Levin explained it: 'Anagogically, it envisages nothing less than the development of civilisation, according to Vico's conceptions. Allegorically, it celebrates the topography and atmosphere of the city of Dublin and its environs. Literally it recalls the misadventures—or other nightmares of H. C. Earwicker. . . . Morally it fuses all these symbols into a central theme—the problem of evil, or original sin.'

According to the *Skeleton Key* interpretation 'Finnegan the hod carrier is identifiable first with Finn MacCool, captain for two hundred years of Ireland's warrior heroes, and most famous of Dublin's early giants. Finn typifies all heroes—Thor, Prometheus, Osiris, Christ, the Buddha—in whose life and through whose inspiration the race lives. It is by Finn's coming again (Finn-again)—in other words by the reappearance of the hero—that strength and hope are provided for mankind.' At the close of their gradus Messrs. Campbell and Robinson explain the Joycean technique: 'Joyce . . . became dissatisfied with the one-dimensional declarative sentence and conventional vocabulary. Pioneer and transinsular spirit, he could not repose contentedly within the bounds of experience and expression delimited by the Anglo-Saxon tongue. . . . With a greed unmatched in the history of Literature he seized all language for his province. He had sucked Latin in with the milk of Jesuit education; with Greek, Sanskrit, Gaelic, and Russian he was on terms of scholarly intimacy. He spoke Italian in his own home; French and German were second mother tongues to him. Obscure dialects, argots, the slang of many nations clung to his ear like limpets. As a young man he had learned Norwegian in order to study Ibsen; oddments from Finnish, Arabic, Malay, Persian and Hindustani are plentifully sprinkled through *Finnegans Wake*. . . . Not content with this traffic in staple words, Joyce hangs numberless outriggers of association on every syllable.'

Mr. Wilson, tracing through one layer of Joyce's associations,

saw Earwicker as 'Tristram stealing Iseult, yes; but—at the suggestion of an Adam's mantlepiece in the bedroom where he is sleeping—he is also Adam, who has forfeited by his sin the Paradise of Phoenix Park; at the suggestion of a copy of Raphael's picture of Michael subduing Satan which hangs on the bedroom wall, he is an archangel wrestling with the Devil. And he has fallen not merely as Adam but also as Humpty Dumpty (he is fat and his first name is Humphrey); as the hero of the ballad of *Finnegans Wake* who fell off a scaffold while building a house (but came back again at the sound of the word 'whisky'); and as Napoleon (an obelisk dedicated to Wellington is a feature of the Phoenix Park: and there is apparently a Wellington Museum). Since the landmarks of the life of Swift still keep their prestige in Dublin, he is Swift,' etc. William Troy saw Earwicker as 'Adam-Caedmon, the original and perfect man, from whose dismembered body have come the multiple phenomena of the earth.'

All these threads and many more can be traced through *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce used a polymyth structure where one discovers everything from Adam to Humpty Dumpty, where rivers and landscapes are personified and language dissolves. The Viconian cycle itself was merely a convenient scaffolding. It is difficult to imagine that Joyce really believed in Vico's four succeeding phases of theocracy, artisocracy, democracy and finally chaos, this last phase to be terminated by a clap of thunder by means of which an awed and terrified mankind would be driven back to its original theocracy. Vico's thunder appears in *Finnegans Wake* onomatopoeically several times in words of 100 letters, as at the beginning, 'bababadalgharaghtakamminarronnkonnbronntonnerronntuonnthunntrovarrhownawnskawntoohoooodenenenthurnuk!' Like the book as a whole it gives Joyce a rare chance to play with syllables, but it is no duplication of the thunder's reality any more than Joyce's complete logograph with its arbitrary and multiple references is a history of mankind.

Joyce was a connoisseur of etymology, who collected words the way other men collect stamps or minerals. After the success of *Ulysses* he gave himself up completely to his hobby and with his own natural bent to intricate enumeration built up the Babel tower of *Finnegans Wake*. The reader may well ask, dismayed at the farrago of words and at the assertion that he should spend the rest of his life pondering over this complex book, what strange, new and overwhelming doctrine lies beneath all this cosmic machinery, what is the stupendous truth that has to be expressed in a new language of compounded words? Professor Levin begs the question by maintaining that what we do not understand we at least feel. 'We are borne from one page to the next, not by the expository current of the prose, but by the harmonic relations of the language—phonetic, syntactic, or referential, as the case may be.' Dr. Jung said of *Ulysses* that behind a thousand veils nothing lay hidden. In *Ulysses* however there was the naturalistic ele-

ment, and Joyce's positive force of hate and defiance. In *Finnegans Wake* Joyce reached a serenity and a detachment new to him. The lean years were over. He was at peace with himself at last, and writing for his own intellectual amusement. Basically however he had nothing more to write about. At the core of his elaborate word-pyramid was an empty room.

One can take almost any random passage from *Finnegans Wake* and by puzzling over it for some time find enough simple associations of the compound words to reduce the passage to some sense and order, even as one can, at first try, fill a certain number of squares in a crossword puzzle. As such it can be amusing, but has no more philosophic value than any other kind of conundrum. According to Messrs. Campbell and Robinson, the following passage, a birth image, represents 'the coming into being of Homo sapiens at the close of the Ice Ages, or of Western Man after the fall of Rome; it represents, too, the birth of the individual after the night of the womb, and the dawn of ego-consciousness'.

'But however 'twas 'tis sure for one thing, what sherif Toragh voucherfors and mappiq makes put out, that the man, Hume the Cheapner, Esc., overseen as we thought him, yet a worthy of the naym, came at this timecoloured place where we live in our parodial fermanent one tide on another, with a bumrush in a hull of a wherry, the twin turbin dhow, *The Bey for Dybbling*, this archipelago's first visiting schooner, with a wicklowpattern waxenwench at her prow for a figurehead, the deadsea dugong updiptdripping from his depths, and has been repreaching himself like a fish-mummer these siktyten years ever since, his shebi by his shide, adi and aid, growing hoarish under his turban and changing cane sugar into sethulose starch (Tuttut's cess to him!) as also that, batin the bulkihood he bloats about when innebbiated, our old offender was humile, commune and ensectuous from his nature, which you may guage after the bynames was put uder him, in lashons of languages, (honnein suit and praisers be!) and, totalisating him, even ham-issim of himashim that he, sober serious, he is ee and no counter he who will ultimendly respunchable for the hubbub caused in Edenborough.'

The authors of *A Skeleton Key* do not divulge how they were able to discover so much in one single fluid sentence, but even if it were as they have stated, it is hard to see what is gained by such elaborate concealment. The fact is that beneath the subterfuges, beneath the word-play—that can at times be pleasantly musical as in Joyce's recorded readings from the Anna Livia Plurabelle passage—no vital thought exists. In the end Joyce's only message to us is that he has none.

Oddly enough the most coherent passages in *Finnegans Wake*, those that follow the course of conventional English most closely are autobiographical, coming from the random thoughts of Shem the son of Earwicker—otherwise James Joyce himself.

From the security of his mandarin position Joyce looked back

with a tolerant smile at the pride of his insolent young manhood, and at his angry challenging self of only yesterday defiantly at work on *Ulysses* in some fly-blown back room. He even poked fun at the book that had made him famous, his 'usylessly readable Blue Book of Eccles', as he called it, punning on the title and the blue cover of the original Paris edition of *Ulysses*, the name of Eccles Street where Mr. Bloom lived, and an early Irish manuscript, the *Yellow Book of Lecan*. Of himself as the author of *Ulysses* he wrote: 'He scrabbled and scratched and scribbled and skrevened nameless shamelessness about everybody ever he met.' *Ulysses* he called 'an epical forged cheque on the public for his private profit.' A few pages on there is an amusing reference to Joyce's final departure from Ireland after Maunsell's publishing house—encountered here as 'Robber and Mumsell, the pulplic dictators'—had destroyed the proofs of *Dubliners*: 'He winged away on a wildgoup's chase across the Kathartic ocean and made synthetic ink and sensitive paper for his own end out of his wit's waste.' Looking back on the haughty 'Non serviam' declaration of his youth, Shem-Joyce remarks to himself, 'You have reared your disunited kingdom on the vacuum of your own most intensely doubtful soul. Do you hold yourself for some god in manger, Shehohem, that you will neither serve nor let serve, pray nor let pray?'

Joyce mocked himself equally with his work. 'Neither of those clean little cherubum, Nero or Nobookisonester himself, ever nursed such a spoiled opinion of his monstrous marvellosity as did this mental and moral defective.' 'Who can say how many pseudo-stylistic stamiana, how few or how many of the most venerated public impostures, how very many piously forged palimpsests slipped in the first place by this morbid process from his pelagiarist pen?'

Joyce did not even spare the book he was working on from his veiled ridicule. He became Maistre Sheames de la Plume, who would if his 'lankalivline lasted wipe alley english spooker, multaphoniaksically spuking, off the face of the erse . . . unconsciously explaining, for inkstands, with a meticulousity bordering on the insane, the various meanings of all the different foreign parts of speech he misused and cuttlefishing every lie unshrinkable about all the other people in the story, leaving out, of course, foreconsciously, the simple worf and plague and poison they had cornered him about until there was not a snoozzer among them but was utterly undeceived in the heel of the red by the recital of the rigmarole'.

Joyce in his seventeen years' labour took almost microscopic pains with his fantastic structure. In the Anna Livia Plurabelle episode he wove together a patchwork of the names of 500 world rivers, and in the Alexandrian elaboration of those few pages he told a critic he had spent over 800 hours.

As he neared the end of his last book his mood seemed to

change from the detachment of myth and language to a personal melancholy. The sorrow of his private life began to weigh on him increasingly, no longer centred in himself but this time in the tragic development of his two children. His father's death in 1931 affected him deeply in spite of all their early differences. Beyond *Finnegans Wake* there is no indication that he had any further literary plans. Through the now lessening distortions of its last pages one senses this undercurrent of regret and unfulfilment. Ostensibly the voice is that of the River Liffey flowing through Dublin and losing itself finally in the sea, but behind the feminine disguise it is Joyce the travel-wearied aged man speaking: 'But I'm loothing them that's here and all I lothe. Loonly in me loneliness. For all their faults, I am passing out. O bitter ending: I'll slip away before they're up. They'll never see. Nor know. Nor miss me.'

If we know much about Joyce's life we know little of Lycophron's. He was born some time before 300 B.C. and became an early exile from his native Chalcis, arriving as an unknown young man in Alexandria during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus. A few years after his arrival he came under the patronage of the Court and was appointed to the Alexandrian Library. There in conjunction with his official duties he wrote an exhaustive study of the works of the comic poets. He moved in the intellectual circles of the city, became one of the Pleiad, a now forgotten group of seven tragic poets who produced experimental plays, and according to Ovid died on the stage while playing a rôle in one of them. He himself composed over forty plays, none of which have come down to us.

Lycophron survives in the history of Greek literature only as the author of the *Alexandra*, its most enigmatic and undecipherable production. In the Alexandrian age he seemed as significant to the scholastics of the Library as Joyce has done to present-day critics. However, in the *Alexandra*, the disguised cross-references to contemporary events, the neologisms and word-play, the many-layered mythological parallels, restricted it to a small cultural elite of contemporary aesthetes and intellectuals who though they considered Lycophron of transcendent importance were unable to transmit any of his significance to posterity. Professor Wright in his *History of Greek Literature* called the *Alexandra* 'a monument of learned folly, the labyrinth of Lycophron "the obscure", composed for an academic clique and interesting to that clique alone.'

The *Alexandra*—another name for Cassandra, the daughter of Priam—is a long poem in tragic iambs, a monologue spoken by the slave who was set to watch Cassandra and report her prophecies to the King. These prophecies extend from the Fall of Troy to the Alexandrian present, and through their network of mythological and antiquarian erudition there are veiled allusive comments on contemporary events. One finds reference to Roman conquests and a surviving fragment of exegesis explains the lion that plays

an uncertain rôle in the latter portion of the poem as Alexander the Great.

Lycophron deliberately misled his readers. He used private key epithets recurringly throughout the *Alexandra*. He was apparently obsessed with esoteric place-names. Whatever action there is in the poem dissolves in anagrams, puns, paraphrases, foreign words, portmanteau nouns and a coined vocabulary. A third of the words Lycophron used were of his own invention, being found nowhere else in Greek literature. He combined disparate phrases, borrowed from Asian dialects, twisted archaisms into new forms. As patterns for his mythologue he tore old myths to pieces and patched together their fragments. The arid pseudo-epic that he evolved made him known through its very difficulty of comprehension. According to M. Croiset, interpreting Lycophron became a professional feat for ancient commentators. 'Yet,' M. Croiset maintains, 'in this unbearable poetry, one must recognise that there was technical cleverness and even the germ of an idea.'

Whatever eschatological secret Lycophron in his hermetic passages may have seemed to hold for the circle of initiates in Alexandria, is lost to us. His pseudo-epic has been passed down and survives by reason of its baffling obscurity as a sterile freak of literature, accidentally immortal through its monumental emptiness, when the greater number of plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides are lost forever.

Nevertheless Lycophron with the *Alexandra* has served his time-spirit well. The polished futility of the Alexandrian age, the dichotomy of literary minds that had severed their means of communication with the world at large, and the rootless uncertainty of a top-heavy commercial civilization, are brought to their full focus in his negative epic. Its effort to break down the old cultural limitations of form and language are a sign of artistic self-doubt, of inner despair in which chaos and dissonance have stultified the creative impulse.

That involuted Alexandrian obscurity for its own sake, with the consequent divorce of the artist from the great majority of his contemporaries, is as characteristic of our age as of Lycophron's. Sharing the same time spirit we respond to the atmosphere of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*—and our cultural void, the fears and frustrations of the uncertain modern world make us sense our emotional kinship with Joyce's nihilistic achievement.

It is extremely doubtful however if the next generation or two—to look no further ahead—will either tolerate or comprehend the transcendent estimate of Joyce's work current in our time. Lycophron held meaning only for his immediate age. Less than a hundred years after his death he was condemned by Lucian, and in Augustan times he was looked on by the Roman literati as a wilfully complex poetaster. The two books of Joyce's maturity may well within a similar period of time seem as incomprehensible

as the *Alexandra*, and Joyce himself as ponderous as the now unreadable Klopstock who 200 years ago also seemed a mediator between heaven and earth.

The test of permanence in literature is truth and clarity. Those few masterpieces that stand out as immortal within the brief limits of human history, tower above their age with its adventitious circumstances of dress, customs, politics, language, and even civilization. The art form that has meaning only for its own generation is quickly submerged in the next. A relatively few basic factors endure through the diverse strata of existence—ambition, conflict, love, death and the mystery of time's passing.

Joyce maintained that he could do anything he wanted with language, forgetting in his logomathic isolation that language is at best a faulty tool, a poor substitute for life itself. His error was that of Lycophron and the Alexandrians. The world artist makes no such mistake. Sharing a common humanity, his genius makes it articulate, preserving in his work those enduring qualities of our unending lives to which men of all ages can give their inner response. When it lacks such qualities art becomes Hellenistic, developing such monstrous curiosities as the *Alexandra* or *Finnegans Wake*, that survive, when they do at all, like mastodons accidentally imbedded in time's glacier.

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LOUIS MacNEICE AS A RADIO WRITER

LOUIS MacNEICE became prominent as a poet in the Thirties, when he figured as the 'Mac' of the conglomerate poet of that period, 'MacSpaunday'. In the succeeding decade, however, MacNeice also became known as a radio writer and some of his scripts, achieving the permanence of print, have become models of the use of the radio medium. The gradual development from 'wireless' to 'radio', from a means of communication to an art-form possessing distinctive qualities, has been marked by the work of certain authors who wrote specially for that blind but sharp-eared instrument, the microphone. In the early days of broadcasting Tyrone Guthrie showed great deftness in the subtle, restrained technique of suggesting to the listener the details of a scene or the appearance of a character. His *Squirrel's Cage* and *The Flowers Are Not for you to Pick* are cited in the growing literature of broadcasting as firmly established in the canon of 'classic' radio plays. MacNeice's radio work, coming as it does at a later stage in the development of broadcasting, naturally has a different emphasis and his use of a poetic technique has resulted in the creation of a number of memorable programmes. He has also given his views on the nature of the radio medium and the kind of writing it needs, so that both his creative achievements and his critical comments are on record.

'On record' in this instance does not mean that they exist only on wax discs or in bundles of scripts filed away in the B.B.C.'s archives. One script—that of his play, *Christopher Columbus*—has been published separately and another collection of scripts has appeared under the title of the chief one—*The Dark Tower*. Here, the creative process of radio-writing returns to its starting-point. The radio writer has to hear the script with his mental ear before or as he writes it; once it is written, the producer and actors have to read and interpret it; so a listener who hears the programme, by a number of intermediate processes obtains the aural impression which the writer originally conceived. If, however, the script is read and not heard, it is the reader's mental ear, not its physical counterpart, which is used and while the programme may not be so effective as if it were heard its merit will (if it is well written) be apparent. Indeed, MacNeice himself has justified the publication of some of his scripts on the ground that they appear to him to be 'good reading'.

It is inevitable that something must be lost in the process of transferring the spoken word into print and MacNeice's first important radio work, *Christopher Columbus*, provides an example of this. This lengthy work, first produced in 1942, had music

specially written for it by William Walton but only the text has been printed, for any attempt to reproduce the music would have distracted the eye and detracted from the printed script. The author acknowledges his debt in the Introduction to the text and regrets the inevitable omission of this 'third dimension'. Yet it is possible to become reconciled to the shorn text, for if the sound reinforces the speech and creates atmosphere, the word must predominate over the sound.

In *Christopher Columbus* the word is descriptive and poetic; descriptive, because it sets the scene of Columbus's struggles and journey as well as personifying his fears and hopes; poetic, because there is a directness of statement as well as a wealth of imagery. It is a lengthy script, written to commemorate the 450th anniversary of the discovery of America, a fact which MacNeice adduces to justify the ending of the play with Columbus's triumphal return to Spain, not with his later struggles. The author's description of the script as "unusually long . . . written throughout in a more or less stylised form and with comparatively long sequences" indicates that it was—and indeed remains—untypical of both 'feature' programmes and radio plays. Instead of narrators there are a 'Voice of Doubt' and a 'Voice of Faith' supported by choruses and stressing the conflict of the action. Some of the scenes—those dealing with tavern and quayside and ship's deck—are treated realistically. The sequences set in the Spanish court consist of fanfares and lengthy monologues with occasional indignant interruptions by Columbus himself. The Doubt and Faith voices supply comment on the action and Columbus's feelings are expressed in soliloquies. The short sequences recounting the voyage and discovery are succeeded by a series of commentaries on the triumphal return and after a final speech by Columbus—

This is my story and this is what it means:

Here and now at your court in Barcelona

In the year of Our Lord Fourteen-Hundred-And-Ninety-Three

Before the Throne of Spain and the eyes and ears of Europe

And before the crowded jury of posterity—

I have brought you a new world.

the chorus ends with—

The world that we have found

Shall ne'er be lost again.

Even this sketchy analysis shows the variety of forms used in the structure of the script. In addition to the usual background 'effects'—guitar music for a tavern sequence, the chanting of *Compline* for a monastery—there are a number of devices, similar to the 'dissolving' process used to link film scenes, which are particularly effective on the air. For instance, when Columbus's

ship leaves, a Litany chanted on the shore merges into a capstan shanty, back to the Litany and then into a hauling shanty, thus placing the scene of the superimposed dialogue by implication in the listener's mind. Sometimes such changes are effected quite simply by the repetition of linking words, as where Columbus ends one speech and begins another by saying—

I must go to the Queen at once and point across the sea
To those invisible gates and open my hand thus
And say 'Your Majesty, here is the key;
Only give me a ship.'

After a pause Columbus repeats himself. But now Isabella is really there to hear him.

Give me a ship, Your Majesty, give me a ship.

The simplicity and repetition of the plea increases the effect on the ear.

The skill of the technique used in the construction of the play is a worthy adjunct to the writing itself. The directness of the speech is again and again apparent from the printed text. In the first monastery sequence there occurs the following clear-chiselled passage—

Prior. You say your trade is the sea? Where did you learn it?

Columbus. At the age of ten in Genoa.

I come of a family of wool-weavers and tapsters
But God gave me a feeling for ships.

Prior. So you are a native of Genoa?

Columbus. I am native of the Kingdom of God.

Such direct passages are balanced by those which are full of verbal music, in the romantic ruminations of tavern talk—

Bartolmé. Antilia and Zipangu . . .

Aye, and Vineland and Hy Brasil. . .

And the Isle of the Seven Cities.

Carlos. And the Fortunate Islands where no one grows old.

Bartolmé. And the islands of the dog-headed men.

And men with only one eye. . .

The guitar stops and the voices die away.

Hy Brasil. . .

The Fortunate Islands. . .

Zipangu. . .

Antilia. . .

Atlantis. . .

or in the 'running commentary' on the triumphal procession—

And now we come to the great white port of Valencia

With its multitude of roofs and its towering campanile
 And the people of Valencia bring us flowers and bring us fruit,
 Blow us kisses as we were lovers and look up to us as gods—
 And we smile the smile of gods and we ride on.
 And now we come to Catalunya, to Roman Tarragona,
 With its dark cobbled alleys clambering up the hill
 And the smell of fish and wine
 And the broken Roman arches that betoken
 So much of the glory of the past
 Which is nothing to the glory that is ours
 That surrounds us as we ride to the King and Queen of Spain
 Holding court in Barcelona. . . .

which 'dissolves' into a herald repeating the words "Holding court in Barcelona!" and ushering in the final sequence. This is rich speech, crested with vivid imagery and moulded to the heroic theme. Only a poet who was also a master of radio technique could have fashioned such phrases and joined them so cunningly together.

Christopher Columbus takes its place in the radio canon because of its directness and vividness but *The Dark Tower* has different qualities. (Incidentally, it possesses qualities satisfying to its author who on its publication in 1947 described it as the best radio script he had written, a judgement which would be generally accepted.) The realism and the visual allusions of *Christopher Columbus* are shed in the treatment of *The Dark Tower* as an allegory, for it is described as 'a radio parable play'. It is based on Browning's poem *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came* which MacNeice describes as "a work which does not admit of a completely rational analysis and still less adds up to any clear moral or message. This poem has the solidity of a dream." The radio programme, too, is "a dream full of meaning." Roland, after being instructed by the Tutor and the Sergeant Trumpeter, is sent by his Mother on the Quest. On his way he meets a solipsist Soak, goes on a voyage and gets entangled with Neaera and is preparing to marry his youthful love, Sylvie, when the voices of his childhood call him. From then on the programme is a sustained soliloquy, an inner searching, a journey through a Forest filled with raucous voices—a Parrot, a Raven, a Clock Voice. His Mother calls him back but he goes on, to see his father and brothers, to watch the Dark Tower rise from the ground and to blow a defiant blast. (Even the capital letters point the allegory.) MacNeice does not offer any explanations of the meaning behind these symbols but the force of the play—the Challenge Call on the Trumpet and the inter-play of the different voices, doubting, tempting and encouraging, like the choruses in *Christopher Columbus*—leave strong impressions on the listener's mind, impressions which the listener is left free to interpret for himself. When the last trumpet note has faded the listener cannot plead ignorance of the

IRISH WRITING

Quest and its difficulties, even though he attaches a personal meaning to them.

The theme of *The Dark Tower* is not an ordinary one for a radio play, yet it has frequently been repeated since it was first produced in 1946. MacNeice's mastery of radio technique is again evident, not least in what he calls "verbal transitions," the 'dissolving' process which has been referred to. For instance, the Sergeant Trumpeter says—

I recommend that you pay a call on Peter.
And his house is low; mind your head as you enter

and Blind Peter's sequence begins—

That's right, sir; mind your head as you enter.

Again, the scene with Blind Peter ends by his saying—

Yes! God bless you! *You've* made up your mind!

to which Roland replies—

But have I, Peter? Have I?

thus leading easily to the line with which Sylvie opens the next sequence—

Have you, Roland dearest? Really made up your mind?

Such essentially radio elements bind the action of script together, linking the individual scenes. Some of the memorable passages occur in the early part of the script, as where the Soak conjures up a Tavern with the aid of musical effects—

Music can build a palace, let alone a pub.
Come on, you masons of the Muses, swing it,
Fling me up four walls. Now, now, don't drop your tempo;
Easy with those hods. All right; four walls.
Now benches—tables—No! No doors or windows.
What drunk wants daylight? But you've left out the bar.
Come on—'Cellos! Percussion! All of you! A bar!
That's right. Dismiss!

This is the kind of passage where Benjamin Britten's special music provides a special ingredient, reinforcing the speech. Then there is a glitter about the dialogue between Roland and Neaera—

Roland. The sea today? A dance of golden sovereigns.
Neaera. The sea today is adagios of doves.

Roland. The sea today is gulls and dolphins.
Neaera. The sea today is noughts and crosses.
 The sea today, Roland, is crystal.
Roland. The sea today Neaera, is timeless.
Neaera. The sea today is drums and fifes.
Roland. The sea today is broken bottles.
Neaera. The sea today is snakes and ladders . . .

In the later part of the script, that dealing with Roland's temptation, the cawing Raven and the cawing Parrott are accompanied by the Clock Voice, a regular, rhythmical, essentially radio sound—

Tick Tock, Tick Tock,
 Sand and grit, bones and waste,
 A million hours—all the same,
 A million minutes—each an hour,
 And nothing stops for nothing starts
 But the hands move, the dead hands move,
 The desert is the only clock—
 Tick Tock, Tick Tock,
 Tick Tock, Tick Tock.

Roland's indecision ends with—

Forward—back; forward—back; forward—back—forward;
 Back—forward; back—forward; back—forward—BACK.
 There! The voice of chance. The oracle of the cactus.
 Back! Back! That's what the cactus says.
 But *I'm*.

(He holds the suspense, then with decision)

.going forward children!
 Did you think I'd let a cactus dictate to me?
 Mother, don't pull on the string; you must die alone.
 Forgive me, dear, but—I tell you I'm going forward.
 Forward, Roland. . . . into the empty desert,
 Where all is flat and colourless and silent.

The soliloquy continues with the throbbing of Roland's heart orchestrated in the background; this reaches its crescendo when Roland defies the growing shadow of the Dark Tower and blows a defiant trumpet-blast. It is with the strong note of the Challenge Call that the programme ends, leaving in the listener's mind the echoes of the sinister voices of the Voyage, the soulless voices of the Forest, the final exhortation of the Sergeant-Trumpeter—

Good lad, Roland. Hold that note at the end.

The symbolic voices have been given distinctive qualities by a poetic pen, the action has been fluently constructed. The result is a memorable piece of radio; poetic intensity has produced a

work which the sharp-eared microphone can reproduce in all its subtlety with immense effect on the listener.

These two works are MacNeice's chief products as a creative radio writer; but his versatility and skill are shown in other pieces printed with *The Dark Tower*. There is a study of Tchekhov on his death-bed, a 'feature-biography' entitled *Sunbeams in his Hat*. The story is told in a series of 'flashbacks' to Tchekhov's childhood, to Sahalin, to Monte Carlo, to the first production of *The Seagull*, to discussions with Gorki and Tolstoy. There is a final dream-sequence, where the German band of Badenweiler gives way to the menacing hooter of the Odessa steamer. The work is short but stylised, a skilful, impressionistic portrait where voice is matched by sound. Similarly in *The Nosebag*, an adaptation of a Russian folk-tale, music was used to illustrate the story of the magic nose-bag which produces geese and imprisons devils and muffles Death. This is the kind of fantastic fable which radio can reproduce excellently because the voices are disembodied; a knock, an echo and a chord can convey an impression which elaborate stagework or intricate cinematic devices could convey only imperfectly.

The last two programmes in the collection are entirely different. *The March Hare Resigns* and *Salute to All Fools* are racy, satirical fancies, brilliant and brittle fripperies. -They are the laughter-stimulating elements which prove the all-round quality of MacNeice's genius for fitting words with the form of radio speech. Incidentally, it is in the second of these programmes that MacNeice smiles a wry, satirical smile at Ireland. It is almost the only reference to Ireland in his radio work, unless the line in *The Dark Tower*, "The sea today is drums and fifes," is an echo of his Carrickfergus youth. In *Salute to All Fools* the March Hare is searching for Truth when he meets a Gael—

Gael. Know English, is it? May the Round Towers turn square! Would she soil her delicate ears and be twistin' her beautiful mouth and pollutin' her pure green blood with a heathen language like that? Whisht—that's her now in the shawl. Takin' up her entrenched position over the graves of the kings. She'll be singin' now, so keep quiet.

Hare. Singing in Gaelic?

Gael. Amn't I after tellin' ye—

(*He is cut off by a soprano singing in a cockney accent*)

Soprano. The blue moon is setting beyond the red pylon
But south of the Border the whisky flows free.

Nonesuch. Gaelic?

Soprano. With all the colleens wearing stockings of nylon
And Father O'Flynn rolling down to the sea—

Hare. But surely she's singing in English?

Soprano. And ock! the dear mem'ries they still linger on

Of Cuchullain and Guinness and Oscar and Conn.

Gael (*outraged*). Stop! Stop! . . .

Soprano. With a carp on the harp and a salmon in the Shannon

And the Poor Old Woman with the sorrows in her shawl

Gael. Put on the other record! . . .

Soprano. An' meself on the shelf and King Billy on his filly

Oh hadn't we the sophistree on Tuesday in the House?

and the Gael stops the singing with a furious orchestral smash. This is the MacNeice of *Autumn Journal*, with his impartial "God save—as you prefer—the King or Ireland" and his more vehement "She is both a bore and a bitch."

One other MacNeice script has appeared in print, in a volume entitled *B.B.C. Features* edited by the radio producer who has been responsible for the development of the B.B.C.'s feature programmes, Laurence Gilliam. But *India at First Sight* is a mere paraphrase, an essay collecting a series of jotted impressions. The decision to transpose the features from their original scripts into readable form has reduced a radio work to a succession of sentences. Then MacNeice's translation and adaptation of Parts I and II of Goethe's *Faust* was one of the B.B.C.'s outstanding broadcasts in 1950, but, though it may seem brusque to dismiss such a programme with a mere reference, it cannot be classified as part of MacNeice's creative radio work.

When a poet produces work in another medium, when he writes novels or plays, it is natural to look for traces of his poetry in prose or dialogue. Enough has been quoted from MacNeice's radio work to show how his poetic technique has been applied to writing for the microphone. But another Thirties poet, Stephen Spender, has queried the use of the microphone for the reading of poetry except by disembodied anonymous voices, arguing that the ideal poetic music must come from sounds similar to the impersonal 'sounds' which strike the mental ear when poetry is read, as distinct from being heard. Writing in the *B.B.C. Quarterly* (Spring, 1951) Spender complains that radio verse plays and drama "do not exploit the possibilities of disembodied sound" and hopes that some day a poet will perform this service for the listener. Here Spender looks forward but a backward glance at MacNeice's work shows how far the process of exploitation has already been carried, with the additional advantage of comments on the workings of the process. One poet speaks as such, the other as poet and radio writer.

In the first place, MacNeice admits that the radio writer's concern is with words-as-they-are-spoken and words-as-they-are-heard but he points out that the actor's voice can give different effects to similar lines. Indeed, flexibility and variety of sound are essential if the listener's ear is not to become bored with monotonous noises. *The Dark Tower* produced with the impersonal voices which Spender advocates would not only lose

its shades of meaning, it would also fail to achieve that assault on the listener's emotions which produces a rare dramatic tension; the effect of both form and content would be lost. Again, Spender's complaint that full use is not made of the possibilities of the radio medium can be countered not only by MacNeice's productions but also by his description of the freedom which the radio dramatist feels—

You can jump from India to the Arctic and from 1066 to 1943. You can make a point with a scene consisting of three lines and no one need fiddle with a curtain or back out the lights. And you can, with less fuss and more credibility than on the stage (and possibly on the screen), introduce—if you want to—allegorical speakers or choruses. You can again, with the help of music and recorded effects present all sorts of scenes—especially scenes of action—that the theatre can rarely attempt. You can finally (though this applies mostly to features) get an effect, if you want to, of up-to-the-minute actuality, a set-piece as vivid as a running commentary.

(*Christopher Columbus*, Introduction, p. 12)

Enough has been said about MacNeice's radio work to show that he has made full use of the mobility of the microphone.

Another of Spender's contentions is that the printed versions of radio scripts display "embarrassing simplicities" and that there is "a gulf between the exceptional complexity of the poet and the exceptional prosaicness of the public." But MacNeice had already encountered this difficulty; in the Introduction to *Christopher Columbus* he argued that the Ordinary Listener, the Man-in-the-Street, had to be kept listening, not by writing down to him, but by using the basic human emotions and their broader forms of expression. (He did admit that this limitation precluded "the more erudite *nuances* of symbolist poetry" but the B.B.C.'s Third Programme now provides a means of broadcasting such poetry to a minority audience). MacNeice therefore concluded that "... radio drama—not because the medium is new but because of its primitive audience—might reasonably be expected to demand a poet's approach" since the broader forms of poetry would appeal to the listener's poetic instinct. MacNeice's radio work progressed from narrative to allegory and his views were modified by that experience. Introducing *The Dark Tower* he stressed that—

What the radio writer must do, if he hopes to win the freedom of the air, is to appeal on one plane—whatever he may be doing on the others—to the more primitive listener and to the more primitive elements in anyone; i.e. he must give them (what Shakespeare gave them) entertainment.

The argument that entertainment must be provided is admirably

illustrated by the experience of the businessman who went to see *The Cocktail Party* and came away entranced by the Mayfair glitter of the surface but saying "I could feel there was something behind it all, but I couldn't say what." The skill of the writing had attracted him on the plane of entertainment while at the same time the existence of another plane of meaning had been indicated, though its exact significance was not appreciated. Similarly *The Dark Tower* itself held the listener on one plane while another was simultaneously constructed.

It seems, therefore, that when Spender called for a new poetic radio dramatist he had already been supplied—by one of the very dramatists whose work he had criticised. Perhaps Spender's difficulties were caused by his using the standards of poetry that is read; MacNeice has recognised the need for new standards when the broadcasting medium reproduces spoken poetry, and adapted his poetic technique accordingly. There is colour and character, sharpness and softness, width and depth in his radio work; it is pure, skilfully fashioned sound. The present-day broadcasting studio is not a Dark Tower, for MacNeice and others have produced trumpet-blasts which have shattered the barrier between writer and audience and whose echoes linger in the listening memory and can be caught on the printed page.

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BOOK REVIEWS

MAGIC OF THE SEA

THE DARK SAILOR OF YOUGHAL, BY PATRICIA LYNCH.
(Dent, 9/6).

It is no news that Patricia Lynch has a pretty gift of fantasy. She has also a creative cunning which gives her work a misleading appearance of artlessness. The gossamer strands of daily detail are woven so plausibly that a reader, young or old, is enmeshed in no time at all: and from the known to the unknown seems the easiest of transitions. Nial goes as messenger-boy to a cross grocer Pegeen at school is top of the class in two subjects but bottom in arithmetic Paudeen, the youngest, is admonished not to be bold. The father of this family, having lost his curragh in a storm, is induced to ship aboard the *Santa Maria* and one reviewer gave him up for lost immediately.

The *Santa Maria*, the *Pinta*—and a third. Maybe a ghost ship does sail the seas off Ireland's Gray Port, followed by a hooker, and sending out a Dark Sailor with local affiliations to act as decoy. The mind is conditioned by homely detail into acceptance of the fantastic. This is the secret of Miss Lynch's skill, and her grace as an artist. E. Nesbit knew the same secret, but E. Nesbit was not Irish.

The sea has always been unpredictable. Longfellow, of the "ghostly Karmilhan" might have been writing of Waterford, Youghal, or the Gray City elsewhere, in his fragment of autobiography.

"I remember the black wharves and the slips,

And the sea tides tossing free,

And Spanish sailors with bearded lips,

And the beauty and mystery of the ships,

And the magic of the sea."

The Dark Sailor is a symbol in every mind; but it requires Miss Lynch to associate his destiny with that of the Burke family, with Mr. MacCarrell's curiosity shop, and the Singing Tower against which the children are so persistently warned. In fact, all those imaginative gifts expelled by a generation of writers determined to be "clever", have taken refuge here. The Burkes' home, a cabin on the western shore, is blown away; the family, reunited, finds another . . . and the Sailor may, for all I know, be running a seaman's lodging house in Youghal like the "Tuskar Lodging House" in Waterford of my childhood. One thing is sure: it is a fortunate young person who receives this book as a present, for—abetted by J. Sullivan's good illustrations—it is the best of Patricia Lynch's so far, with an atmosphere authentically west-of-Ireland.

A microscope is necessary for the faults. On one page at least

the pronouns have got out of hand, and "the boy", reiterated, worries ear and eye. Also, a "passageway" aboard ship is an alleyway, surely. But in every other respect—storms, suspense, the Apple-motif, the naturalness of the children, their calm, good grandmother, the wretched old white horse whose appearance was so misleading, and the guileless ending—it is a truly magic book.

TEMPLE LANE.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE RISING

CUIMHNI CINN, By LIAM O BRIAIN, (*Sairseal & Dill*, 8/6).

The qualities looked for in a work of great historical interest are rather different from those required in a novel or fantasy of any sort. An excellent memory, a clear and vivid style, the living sense of drama that enables a writer to place people and events in their proper perspective—Professor Liam O Briain enjoys these gifts to the full. His *Recollections* is the latest volume to appear under the auspices of An Chlub Leabhar. The Council are to be congratulated on their choice. It is a book that should be in every home. Even if the householder is in ignorance of his native language, the younger generation will enjoy reading the book.

It always seems a pity to me that anyone writing in Irish should choose the Roman characters instead of our Gaelic lettering. Fortunately, Professor Liam O Briain does not eschew the letter *d*, as the ultra modern spellers do. Will no scholar rise up against this banishment of the letter *d* from our language? *Inniu* is flat-footed; *Gaeilge* is invertebrate—and to spell *Nodlaig* with two *ll*'s, is in my humble opinion, almost blasphemy. A language is a living thing and must be treated with respect.

Any personal recollection of the Rising as told by one who took part in it must necessarily be a most precious document. We have had far too few Reminiscences by the men of 1916; but it is not too late to hope that there may be more to follow. Liam O Briain admirably captures the atmosphere of high endeavour and genial kindness that surrounded us, in those days: the unbelievable gaiety of these Ceilidhe, night after night, leading right up to the Rising—and no one (except the leaders) dreaming that this was coming so soon. Someday... of course, we all hoped...

Although, in general, the appraiser of *temporis acti* can be accused of sentimentality, it must be obvious to anyone looking round him, in these days, that the noble spirit that went to building up the fight for freedom—the spirit of joyful hope, of brotherly love—exists nowhere at the present time.

It is the great privilege of the older generation to-day to have had friends and acquaintances among the men and women mentioned in this book. The young will surely avail themselves of the opportunity to enjoy this simple and clear account of a section of the fight—sharing for a while the companionship of

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those recent heroes of our race—as they fought and marched and moved about these very streets that are part of our lives—offering up their all, for this island whole and entire—this *Eire gan roinn* of the song.

We may well exclaim to our author: Thank you for everything!

BLANAID SALKELD.

THE SHELBOURNE, BY ELIZABETH BOWEN. (*Harrap*, 15/-).

All large hotels are linked by a whiff of expensive cigar smoke: Rome, Paris, Dublin, and there is the same smell of well-being as you pass the door. Shut my eyes and it is part of a childhood recollection of an odd, un-home like, adventure-suggesting world, *The Imperial*, Cork, with Florrie on its doorstep. Perhaps Irish hotels, unlike many of the pubs., have retained a good deal of their character. Sensible *hoteliers*, to use a grand word, should read Elizabeth Bowen's study of *The Shelbourne, a centre in Dublin life for more than a century*, before ejecting too much old furniture and fittings for moquette and brown leather conformity throughout.

To stay in an old establishment is to feel the packed weight of association round, beneath, over one. This book, which brings much of it into print, shows the changes and development of *The Shelbourne* since Martin Burke opened it in 1824, and describes the atmosphere there to-day. 'The hotel's own past is related to that of Ireland; both its character and its place in the human pattern are important . . .' and a good hotel, Elizabeth Bowen continues, 'has virtue—a virtue hard to define.'

She has explored the building from roof-top to modern kitchens, been through old menus and ledgers, gone outside to newspapers and books, traced the links between the Jury, Crossman and Cotton families concerned with ownership and management. Some of the best narration deals with 1916 and the Civil War, when letters written at the time have been made available and she has also used the recollections of people still working there. Rather than write the rather dry term 'social history' for so femininely perceptive a book, better to say it is the result of much hard work and a good deal of enjoyment, now with sketches, reproductions and photographs, set pleasantly before us.

PATRICIA HUTCHINS.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

- MAURICE KENNEDY:** Born Youghal, Co. Cork, 1924. Is in the Civil Service. Has had work published in 'The Dublin Magazine' and is dramatic critic for an Irish Sunday paper.
- ROBERT O'DONOGHUE:** Born Cork, 1925. His poetry has appeared in earlier issues of 'Irish Writing.'
- PAUL BRAMBLE:** Is the pen-name of a young Cork painter who has exhibited at the Oireachtas and the Munster Fine Arts Club.
- ERIC CROSS:** Born 1905 of Irish parentage. Is a research chemist. Has published stories and a novel, 'The Tailor and Ansty'.
- TERESA DEEVY:** Born Waterford, lives in Dublin. One of Ireland's most well-known dramatists. Her plays have been produced all over the world and have also been broadcast in Ireland and England.
- W. F. MALONE:** Born Belfast, 1927. Barrister and civil servant. Radio Critic on the 'Belfast Telegraph' and contributor to the 'Radio Times'.
- SAMUEL BECKETT:** Born Dublin. Gained a wide reputation on the publication of his novel, 'Murphy'. Lives in Paris where he writes poetry and prose, in English and French, and contributes to the leading French reviews. Recently runner-up in one of France's major annual literary awards, the Renaudot Prize.
- FRANCIS RUSSELL:** An Irish-American who has contributed to 'The Bell', 'The New English Review', and 'The Christian Science Monitor'. Is working on a novel.

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